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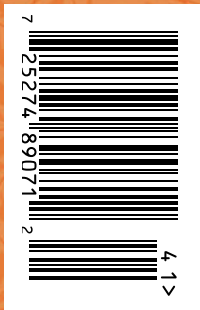
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The Beltane Papers

A Journal of Women's Mysteries

ISSUE 41
FALL
10,007TH
YEAR OF THE
GODDESS

\$10.00 CAN
\$7.50 USA



“VIRGO” BY ELIZABETH KYLE

A Life Complete

If I had but 30 days to live,
how would I complete my life?
What would be on my “to do” list
of projects to finish, contacts to make?

There would be just this one thing...

I'd go home –
to the place of my birth, where I am
rooted still,
like the sturdy cottonwoods

I'd lean into the prairie wind and let it blow
away
any remaining hurt or regret,
still clinging on, tenaciously, like so many
dead leaves

I'd let my arms float out in a wide embrace,
arch my back, tilt my head to the sun,
and sprawl –
claiming my place amid the Indian grass
and the wild roses in the ditches

I'd visit my mother's grave, and gingerly
touch that
smooth, granite stone, which in no way
resembles
her

I'd listen to the meadowlarks' cascading
serenade –
delightful, lilting...beyond imitation;

Knowing, I'm not *going* anywhere...I'm
coming home.

People ponder the idea of an “other-worldly”
afterlife,
but I know where I'll be...

I'll dart among the tall grasses with the ring-
necked pheasants,
blithely soar with the sparrow hawks,
nestle in with the lichen that sprout in
damp nooks
at Red Rock Falls;
I'll be there, eternally refreshed by the rising
mist
from the frothy, tumbling waters

And every spring wisps of cotton will gather
at my feet, and
I'll scoop up copious handfuls and toss
them to the wind,
to watch them meander, carefree, back
to the ground

For the downy seeds will not venture far
from home;
Like me, they will sink into the rich earth...
deeply, gratefully,
contentedly.

by Lisa Wersall

The Beltane Papers exists to provide women with a safe place within which to explore and express the sacred in their lives, to educate, empower, encourage and entertain, to inspire, support and reinforce their perception of reality. Published 3 times annually The Beltane Papers is a registered corporation in the state of Washington.

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Incorporated February 12th, 9098th year of the Goddess (1998)

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The Beltane Papers

A Journal of Women's Mysteries

Issue #41

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This publication is printed on recycled paper with soy ink

This publication is printed on recycled paper with soy ink by Consolidated Press, 600 S. Spokane St., Seattle, WA 98134 (206) 441-1844

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Advertising: Classified ads are 75 cents per word, first several words in bold caps. Non-profit is \$7.50 for up to 50 words. For display ad rates, Diane Saarinen at Diane@thebeltanepapers.net or write c/o The Beltane Papers.

Subscriptions

US rates: Sample \$5
1 year/3 issues \$16
2 years/6 issues \$32

In Canada: Sample \$7US.
1 year/3 issues \$22US
2 years/6 issues \$44 US

Elsewhere: Sample \$8.50US
1 year/3 issues \$25US
2 years/6 issues \$50US

All items shipped to Washington state addresses must be taxed. See Magazine subscription form on page 64

Member of the Wild Women's Association

Disclaimer: The opinions and ideas of the contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of all the staff members.

About this issue. . .

This has been a difficult and sad year for TBP. Our community has lost another beloved elder, Shekhinah Mountainwater, who passed away on August 11, 2007. I loved Shekhinah's style and passion. She wrote from her heart and experience. She seemed to me to be the embodiment of 'free spirit' and 'muse', but one who you could get to know and love, not some distant abstract description of a quality. She was a teacher and priestess even to the end; she shared her experience with cancer and used it as a means of teaching us.

"Cancer is often referred to by words like carcinoma and carcinogen...surprisingly similar to the word "incarcerate." Cancer can result from imprisonment, from being blocked in one's flow of creative expression... made to be silent by a world that does not always support creative people very well, or listen with care to our artists, our women, our mothers and grandmothers. To have one's creative expressions denied and unshared is to die a little inside each day that goes by in suppression. Joyous self expression is one of the antidotes to cancer. And if you think of cancer as metaphor for the isolations and repressions of this society, you can also think of how releasing the Muse's flow brings about the healing." ~ Shekhinah Mountainwater

Even her death was shared with us. Z Budapest performed her last rites and wrote of the experience in blog at http://blog.zbudapest.com/2007/08/my_final_visit_with_shekinah.shtml. Death is a private matter and rarely do those other than intimate friends and family share such an experience as final rites and rituals.

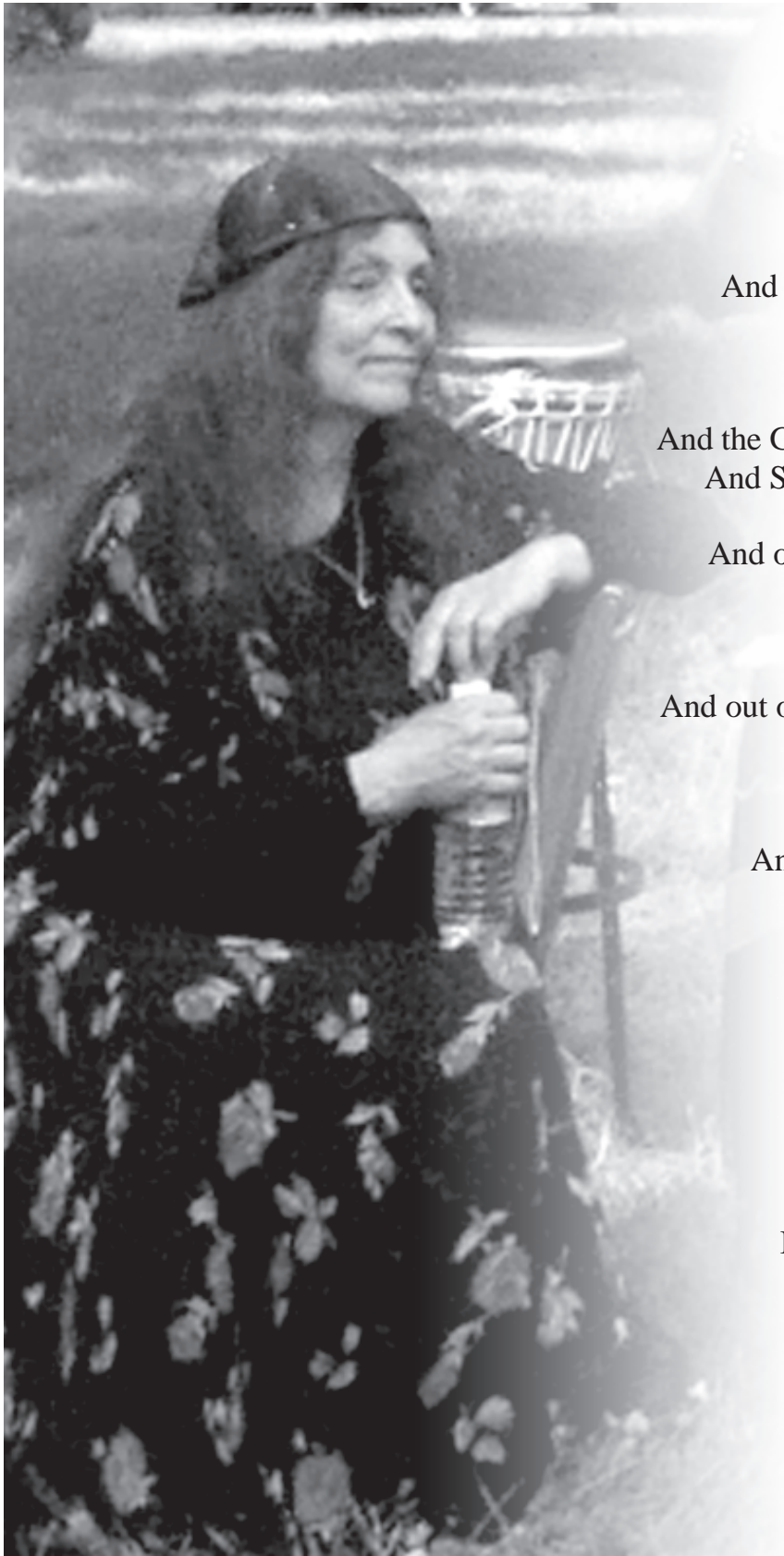
We are also coming up on the 1st anniversary of Marione's passing. I knew I could keep TBP going for another year and with the help and support of so many volunteers we have indeed done this. But it hasn't been easy and our biggest weakness is money. TBP has always barely scraped by with infusions of cash from time to time from Marione or me. I have reached a point financially that I

cannot continue to provide personal funds to keep TBP afloat. She must stand on her own to succeed. To do this She needs to generate more revenue in the form of paid advertisements. I am offering 10% of every new paid ad brought to TBP. We need to create about \$2000.00 in ad revenue for the next issue to be able to print. We continue to accept donations with the understanding that we have not completed our Federal non-profit status and there for these donations cannot be deducted for income tax purposes. Please help TBP to thrive. Thank you for your continued support

~Lisé Quinn

About the cover

"Virgo" is one of a series of paintings called "Twelve Queens of the Heavenly Kingdoms." Her beautifully embroidered medieval cap could be representative of her thoughts, and one of the birds has "come alive" and flown away: the power of our imagination; potential; whatever we think we can do, we can do. Her wild-berry garland and golden straw-like hair remind us of abundance and hints of the Corn Goddess. Visionary surrealist Elizabeth Kyle, a New Zealander living on the Gold Coast, Australia, has created over 700 works emanating from lucid visions over the last 30 years. She is presently writing a book on her art and magical "medieval" quest for her Castle studio/gallery/home. See the back cover of this issue for contact information.



THEALAGIE

In the beginning is Goddess
And Goddess is One
Source of All Things.

And She creates Her Self from Nothing
And out of Nothing She comes
By Magic.

And the Goddess is filled with Joy and Love
And She takes great Pleasure in Her Self

And out of Her Self She makes Her Self
And the Self She makes
Is Woman.

And out of Her Passion and Nurturing Love
She makes the Breasts of Woman
Soft and sweet

And out of Her Power and Creativity
She makes the Womb of woman
Warm and deep

And out of Her Joy and Pleasure
She makes the Yoni of Woman
Mysterious and Inviting

And out of Her vast Intelligence
She makes the Mind of Woman
Ingenious, understanding, and wise

And out of Her flowing Wisdom
She makes the Blood of Woman
Filled with the forces of Life

And out of Her infinite Spirit
She makes the Spirit of Woman
Everlasting...

*Shekhinah at WWF 2003 - Prayer excerpted from a longer piece called "Scripture
Fragment" by Shekhinah Mountainwater 1939-2007*

Issue 41 Autumn- 10,007th year of the Goddess

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She has risen bless Shekhinah Mountainwater Sings

On Saturday, August 11, at 2:30 PM PST, Shekhinah Mountainwater took her final breath and released her Spirit back to the arms of the Goddess once more. She was surrounded by several dear friends and her Daughter Angel. The care and Divine elegance with which she was tended to in her final days was truly the way an Elder who has contributed so much to the Womanspirit Movement should be honored.

Z Budapest came down to give Shekhinah her Last Rites of Passage on Thursday and it was just what the Witch Doctor ordered as Shekhinah was clearly moved and even energized from that experience.

This is the way we sisters must learn to care for each other: with honor, love and respect. I will share much more of these events in the next issue where I will offer words from the many voices who loved Shekhinah.

Many of you may remember her book, *Ariadne's Thread*, which was a key volume from the early stirrings of the Women's Spirituality Movement.

I first encountered Shekhinah's words across the page from my *Astroflash* column in the now-defunct *Of A Like Mind*, where we were both contributors for some 13 years.

Shekhinah Mountainwater, like her name, was one-of-a-kind and, in her own words, "on the tip of the wave of Women's Spirituality."

If she were sitting next to me now, she'd be saying, in her still-thick NYC accent, "Now, now they give me a big show?"

And what a show it has been. Even Morgan La Fey could not have gotten a nicer write-up on the front page of the Santa Cruz Sentinel.

My dear Shekhinah has begun her next journey and finished her final chapter here on this Earth that she loved. I am so grateful that she was able to leave with all the honor that she deserved and all the gentleness that was such a gift from the Goddess and the Maidens and Crones who surrounded her. My eternal gratitude for their generosity and care.

Her words and life were about magic and, here in her final hours, she opened yet another door, another teaching on the highest of Scorpio lessons...letting go, which, like her Aphrodite self, she did with grace and beauty.

I grieve as yet another of my tribe, of my lovers, has left this world and I rejoice that she is free of suffering at last and in the arms of the Goddess once more.



Blessings of the Goddess, Shekhinah, Fly in Peace 1939-2007

I realized after hearing of Shekhinah's last words to Z and the others before she passed..."Don't Forget Me," that this poem was actually a conversation from me to Shekhinah as she lay near death on the other side of the country.

~ Blessings, Flash Silvermoon

Sea Priestess of the Moon

by Flash Silvermoon

*Sea Priestess of the Moon drifting
through heaven's sweet gate*

*Sleep once more on the consoling breast
of the Goddess*

*Let Her take you in Her arms and
rock you till your fears are gone and
your tears join Her Ocean once more*

*Like the Sirens of olde, sea lions sing
to you from their rocky coves singing*

Come—come join our song

*Like the Silkies of olde, who no mortal
could hold, the pacifying Ocean will
show you the way home*

*Like Ariadne and her thread, you
wove a culture and a web*

*And forever your words will weave the
hearts and souls of generations to come,
honoring each woman old and young*

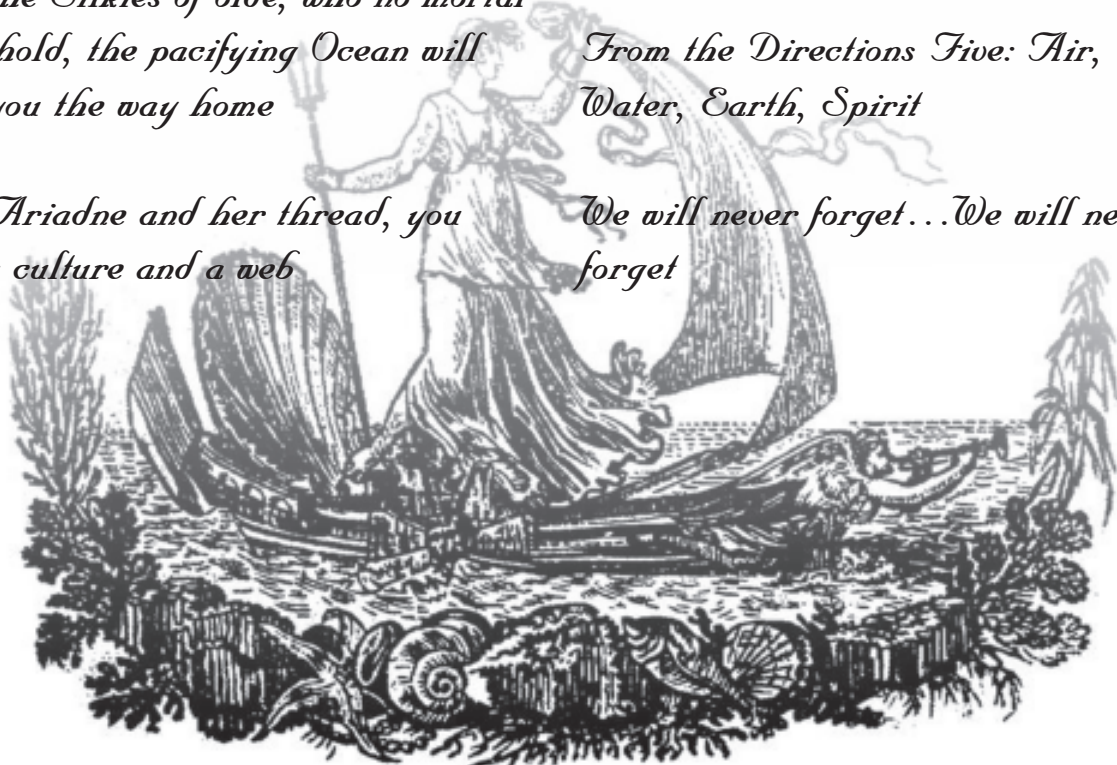
*The Ancestors will greet you when you
cross the great Sea and honor you with
velvets and flowers and weed*

*Now pain and worries of the world can't
bind you and there is nothing to do but
feel all the love that surrounds you*

*Go to Her now dear sister, lover, friend
and know that this is both beginning and
end*

*From the Directions Five: Air, Fire,
Water, Earth, Spirit*

*We will never forget...We will never
forget*



Collective Comments

Women's spirituality is both deeply personal and a way of being that transforms the world by changing those who follow its path. We wanted to know how some of those who read and contribute to *The Beltane Papers* view women's spirituality and so we asked them this question:

What do you see as the mission and importance of women's spirituality (however you define this) both personally and globally?

The answers we received were thoughtful, individual, insightful, and deeply felt and we are honored to be able to share them with you.

.....

One thing that living "on the land" in my youth blessed me with is the realization that all Nature is sacred, that the Earth is still relentless in her drive to keep manifesting and nurturing life. I came to "Women's Spirituality" as a result of my involvements with Nature and with other like-minded, strong-spirited women. To me, spirituality is a natural outgrowth of feminism as I experience it—if we are moving outward in society, so must we be moving inward embracing Spirit, or we will lose our balance, our way, and what it means to be Woman.

~ Jessica North-O'Connell

Women's Spirituality is groundbreaking, Earthshaking, mind-altering and world shaping! It is nothing short of essential for the survival and elevation of this planet. The politriks of patriarchy and its lightning bolt hurling spirituality that creates devils out of Goddesses has had the world in its thrall for some 4000 years and has brought us to the edge of near extinction. What we believe, we create, and a spirituality that is fear-based can only bring death and danger to its believers. Change the paradigm to a cosmic view of an all loving mother[s] who loves all of HER children and the planet and you have a belief system that not only sustains life but promises a more healing and loving way of life.

To my thinking, two things have pushed the world into this chaos. One is the externalization of the Divine, looking to an outer authority for connection with Spirit, which both disempowers and removes any personal responsibility for right action. The other is a Patriarchal godhead that

empowers only straight, white, Christian, able-bodied MEN.

If every child was born into this world knowing that she/he was Goddess/ God, i.e., that they were all Divine and t h a t

Spirit was within and without them, no one could put them on the back of any bus! It would be a vastly different world I can tell you that.

W o m e n ' s Spirituality is communal and global in scope and honors the process and not just the outcome and it is precisely this kind of thinking that will save the world.

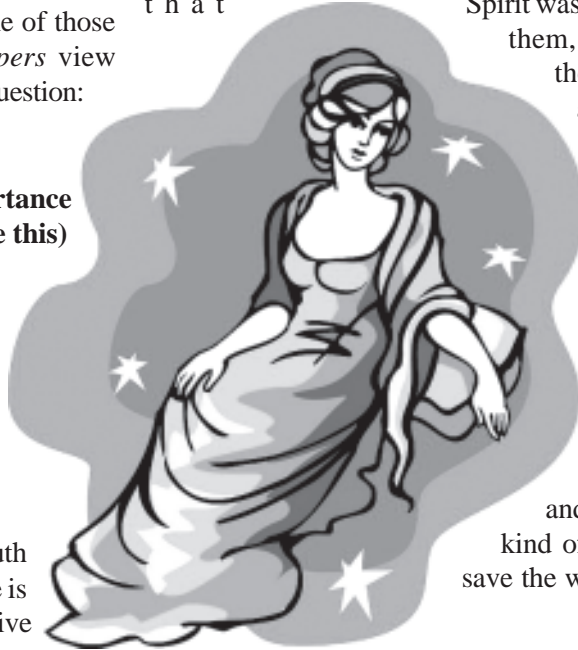
~ Blessings, Flash Silvermoon

More than ever, women's spirituality is timely and necessary! Whether or not it's literally true that the planet was a more peaceful and egalitarian place when the Goddess was worshipped, this, in Shakespeare's words, is a "consummation devoutly to be wished"!!

We inhabit a planet ravaged by violence, increased environmental degradation and global warming. If more people were concerned with protecting the earth and appreciating the Mother for her nurturance and caretaking, and if war and macho heroism were not idealized, this planet would be bound to be a more peaceful, just and sustainable place. Viva women's spirituality!

~ Mary Edda Gamson

Every time we gather in strength, let us remember those who cannot because they no longer draw breath, killed solely for their sex. Every time we gather in affluence, let us remember those who are paid a fraction of what they are due, solely because of their sex. Every time we gather and affirm our worth as women, let us remember those who are told they are worthless, solely because of their sex. When we refer to god with a woman's name, even in



private, we push the pendulum back a little bit more toward a world in which all women will be free, in which all women will be valued.

But maybe it just kicks up another theme: the connection between activism and spirituality. Is compassion without action simply indulgence?

~ Amy Martin

When I think of women's spirituality, the first thing that comes to mind is "mother earth," the way Native Americans refer to earth and all its creations. Living in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina right in the middle of the Bible Belt surrounded by one extreme or the other when it comes to different religious practice (primarily Baptist), I am often asked, "Where do you go to church? How does God speak to you"? My reply is that the Blue Ridge Mountains are my temple; God's voice speaks to me constantly through the Mother Earth with all the life, sounds, scents and textures she has to offer.

~ Janet E. Meadows

To me, this means the interaction and understanding of our relationship with the divine through the perception and experience of women. For too long, society's view of spirituality has been masculine and paternalistic. For too long, women have played a minor, if not non-existent, role in spirituality at best, and have been demonized in it at it's worst. It is the time for another view.

I believe Women's Spirituality is a facet of Feminism. It is an attempt at equality in the relationship with the divine (which of course can never truly be unequal or dualistic in its truest experience). It brings to us a Goddess who understands our unique needs as women, who expresses the archetypes that represent women's unique qualities and abilities. Women's Spirituality gives a symbolic language that allows women to communicate with each other and exchange ideas and understanding.

Goddesses most importantly give women archetypes that are not child bearers only, ones that can support them in experiences outside of motherhood, be it Athena, Sarasvati, or Artemis, or a multitude of others to choose from. All of our God/desses are representations of the divine—even as we are divine in the flesh. Women's Spirituality is a celebration of the spirit and gender that is woman.

~ Lisé Quinn

LETTERS TO TBP

Brava *TBP* staff for having the guts and determination to bring *TBP* flying up and out of the ashes like a Phoenix and maintaining your independence, too. That is so important because these days there are precious few mags that truly speak to the cutting edge of feminist-based women's spirituality, that support writers with an experience-based point of reference rather than mostly an academic view. That is not to say that academia does not spawn some brilliant work, too. In our male-dominated modern culture, the intellect can often be allowed to dominate the more spiritual/experiential/emotional expressions which are such a part of women's wisdom and strength. I am glad that *TBP* provides space for all sides of our brains to explore and report. Write on sisters!

Blessings

~Flash Silvermoon

Bravo Indeed! And, what she said!

~Muddea Dea

Hello,

Probably no one at *The Beltane Papers* knows me any more. For most of eight years, I have lived on the Eastern side of Washington state. My soul's homeland is Whatcom and Skagit counties. Marione held an open house at Michael's bookstore years ago. I had known of *The Beltane Papers* and, hungry to share my work, I decided to investigate. I walked into that dusty room a stranger and left uplifted, welcomed, feted, glowing from the start of a new friendship. Marione had a keenly honed ability to dig beneath the surface, to really listen. The news of her death stuns me. I've been remiss at continuing our friendship. I've allowed the miles to distance us. Regret and gratitude. Thank you for carrying her heart's work forward. This last issue is worthy of her vision. Thank you for keeping the line open to the Goddess—very much like pumping water to a thirsty garden.

~Lenore (Thomason) Plassman

I still miss those I loved who are no longer with me but I find I am grateful for having loved them. The gratitude has finally conquered the loss. ~ Rita Mae Brown

WISDOM AND STORIES FROM "THE BELTANE PAPERS" WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY TELE-FESTIVAL

by Diane Saarinen

The week of May 14th-18th was a busy one for the staff at *The Beltane Papers*. That was the week of our first-ever "Women's Spirituality Tele-Festival." Five speakers on five different nights gave seminars or participated in interviews with a live audience—all tuned in via the magic of telephone conference call! Our speakers were all contributors to *The Beltane Papers*: Robin Rose Bennett; Karen Tate; Kris Waldherr; Flash Silvermoon; and Mama Donna Henes. It was a wonderful experience for us, and, at the time of this issue's production, we are tossing around the idea of hosting another Tele-Festival. Here are some snippets of conversation.

From Robin Rose Bennett's "Herbs to Deepen Spiritual Awareness and Intuitive Wisdom in Meditation, Ritual and Ceremony":

I always think of her as "Grandmother Hawthorn." And she's a skinny little, twisty tree. With deep, deep, strong thorns. So the other medicine here is this medicine of healthy boundaries. And I just love that they come together—that this tree that helps the heart so much, helps the heart to open. Also, shows us that we can have an open heart. We can be sensual and sexual. We can be beautiful and attractive and we can have healthy boundaries.

So I love that! And often, I'll include one of her thorns in my medicine. I don't drink the thorns, obviously, because they are sharp! They were actually inspiration for the first sewing needles. But I like to put a thorn in and I like to keep a thorn or two on my altar because, you know, I work with a lot of people and I want to be open, and I also want to know that I have a healthy sense of



boundaries. So hawthorn tea is great for this, and, while we're on the topic, I will say that roses—rose tea, steeped for about an hour—is a little different energy but also absolutely connected to when you want to—in your ritual or in your meditation, or even just in your day-to-day—when you want to open yourself to love. Love of self. Love of life. Love of the world.

From Karen Tate's "Goddess Advocates and Sacred Sites":

What can we all do to raise awareness of Goddess? Well, there are a few answers, I think. First of all, I think we all have to take responsibility for our own education. You know, I don't think we can allow anybody to spoon-feed us about anything. That's number one. I think also, two, we have to hold all our leaders—no matter who they are—accountable. I think that's part of restoring integrity, you know, in our world so that people perform at a higher level of service.

I think women especially—women have to begin supporting one another. You know, standing shoulder-to-shoulder, uplifting one another. We live in this dominator culture. And we have been taught to compete. We have the scarcity mentality, which sometimes causes real negative emotions to come out. I think we really have to start thinking of the Goddess as abundance. Thinking of Goddess as "the secret" so to speak? You know, *The Secret* that's out, the Laws of Attraction? Because if we really do believe what we put out in the world comes back to us, then if we put out love and kindness and generosity and support, then we're going to get that all back. We don't have to worry about there not being enough.

And I think that's really important to think about. Especially for women, as I said. Because we're the nurturers. We're

the caregivers. We're the gender that brings forth life. We have an incredible influence on generations and I think we have to take that seriously. Because that expression, "the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world"—or at least influences the world? I think it's really important that we treat each other using those positive life-affirming ideals. And I think that reverberates out then.

From Kris Waldherr's "Oracles of the Goddess":

Kris: If I'm doing a watercolor, usually it takes me about a week. Little paintings will take a little bit longer because I have to wait for things to dry in between the layers. And then I like to usually put things away for a week or so and then go back and work a little bit more so I have a fresh eye. Because I don't fully trust myself when I'm in the middle of working really hard on something... For the expanded edition of the *Book of Goddesses*, I created 70 new paintings.

Diane: Seventy?!

Kris: Yeah, 70 new paintings. Seven-zero (laughs.)

Participants: (all laughing.)

Kris: I know, I know! I'm insane. Well, a lot of them are very small and I vaguely remember doing them because it was about three months after I gave birth. I wasn't sleeping anyway so I figured I may as well stay up and paint. So I kind of remember them through this hormonal haze.

Participant: That's what you should have named it. "The Hormonal Haze!"

Kris: The "Hormonal Haze" deck!

From Flash Silvermoon's "Animal Communication":

It's our ability to recognize how evolved they are and not think of them as "just animals." That really helps them elevate as well. You know, sort of like with children. If you set limits for them in your own mind, it limits them as well... It always amazes me when I see alleged "experts" on TV saying, "You know, animals *feel*!" The animals—in some ways, just like people—there's some that are more and less evolved. When I work with different ones, some of them respond much better to the alternative remedies that are very vibrational and more delicate. Just like some people do.

They are so much more available than most people. I've

worked professionally as a psychic and astrologer for some 37 years with people, and in that time, I've worked—early on—some with animals but really over the last 20 or so years, my work with animals has become more significant and much more deep. And I've never had an animal be as rude to me as a person! They'll never say, "Are you any good?" They'll never ask me really ridiculous questions. They either respond to what you give them or they don't. They're very clear.

From Mama Donna Henes' "The Queen in Midlife":

I think a lot of people look at adolescence and remember how hard that was. You know, every once in a while I meet someone who says, "Oh, you know, 16 was the best year of my life!" and somehow I don't trust anybody whose teen years were the best years of their lives. The teenage/adolescent transition is really hard. But it's all about growth. It's all about gaining. It's like growing pains that are so hard...so it's very exciting and it's all about gain.

But the midlife transition is all about loss. Completely about loss. I mean, starting with our body. We lose our youthful, dewy good looks. Not to say that midlife women aren't beautiful! I think we are incredibly beautiful. A lot of us more so than ever before in our lives. But we don't look young and sweet and perky and all that smooth anymore... If we've had children, we lose our children to their own lives and experience an empty nest. If we haven't had children—and between a quarter and a fifth of the Baby Boom generation did not have children—then we kind of mourn the children we never did have.

In midlife, we start losing our parents. Certainly, there are exceptions... And a lot of women in their 50s and 60s become widows. And the divorce rate in midlife is phenomenal, it's huge! And something like close to 80 percent, I think it is 78 percent of all midlife divorces that are instigated by the woman!... We lose that naïve kind of innocence that we will live forever, and that changes everything for us. We really lose a lot.

Missed the Tele-Festival? The teleseminars were recorded and are now available for \$9.99 each at The Beltane Papers' Café Press shop at:

<http://www.cafepress.com/tbshop/3186988>

Developments regarding future Tele-Festivals can be found by visiting the Staff Blog at <http://thebeltanepapers.net/blog/> Thank you for your enthusiasm!



by Alanna Muniz
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If the journey is more important than the destination, how will I ever know when I have officially arrived?

In a world where pain is the rule and never the exception, I find myself cloaked in a life of complicated ironies and contradictions. I am 21 years old. It feels as if I have never lived at all; it feels as if I have lived forever. I stand on the edge of the world, balancing uncertainly between life and death. It is as if I reside somewhere between the dark and the new moon, where the seen and unseen blend together, where light and life struggle to emerge each month out of death and darkness. The Crone holds one of my hands, the Maiden the other. I know not where to turn or what path to take. My body in many ways is dying, sinking down into the underworld and the unclenching shadows of my mind. My heart and spirit are crying to break free, reaching out and calling for the moon. Alone I stand; alone I fight. In my most desperate times I look to the Goddess for guidance, but I feel shut out, ignored, and my cold tears continue to drip silently down my bruised body.

I stare into the mirror and get lost in the hazy reflection I see staring back. The only person I have ever truly known

is the stranger I cannot recognize before me. I am a woman, but I have the body of a girl. I am alive, but I am living a lifeless life. I ache for balance and freedom from torment, but I have the hardest time letting go of the suffocating pain that I have let define who I am. Pain makes me remember that I am alive, but it also makes me remember how cut off from the world I am. It is like I am continuously drawn to what I think I can never have, and the closer I get, the more I believe it is strictly out of my reach. My soul whispers to me everything I desire in life, but my mind threatens me with lies that constantly lead me astray. My soul silently suffers, but my body never suffers silently. While it would be ideal to embody the limitless potential of the Maiden at my age, I sadly realize I cannot even embody myself.

The Maiden is a young girl or woman coming into her body and recognizing her true power. Her blood flows vibrantly inside and out, reflecting and mimicking the natural cycles she witnesses all around her in nature. Her muscles and bones grow strong. Her awakening sexuality is as fresh as the newness of spring. Instead of finding my way into my body, I feel as if I am moving right out of it. I long to run through the wilderness like the goddess

Artemis. Yet I cannot cultivate my huntress independence when I feel unstable, uprooted from this Earth. I cannot run free on land when I feel like the wind will steal my weightless body into its mighty grasp. The natural cycles inherent in my body are disrupted by vicious cycles of self-deprivation and self-denial. My own blood freezes over as my heart beats slowly and erratically beneath my icy skin. Pleasure and disgust in and with my body haunt me in both their presence and absence. I am numb, but I sense every bleeding wound and intimately discern every scar. I cannot stand firmly as the protectress of my younger sisters. Their bodies can now withstand more than my own.

My body is from this earth, but the ever-widening chasm between body and mind is fueling the constant burning embers of disconnection. In my bony hands I juggle the heavens, the seas, the lands. Aware that I have lost the Goddess within me, I attempt to create a world on the outside that reflects my tortured body. I mold the mountains flat like a belly and shape the barren tree branches into the frailest of limbs. I freeze the waters with my hardened tears and starve the lands into endless winters. Protruding, aching bones shapeshift into the sharpest of crystallized icicles. Muscle, tissue, and fat disintegrate, as the body and land have nothing to feed on but themselves. Starvation has consumed and swallowed the moon during the eclipse of my soul. Carefully, I place myself on the goddess Maat's scales to weigh my self-worth. I ask the following question: Is my body sacred or simply scarred?

The Maiden nourishes her body, mind, and spirit through her budding recognition of her own wants, needs, and desires. She follows her intuition and gives volume to her inner voice. My own voice is often choked, bound, and gagged. I find myself voicelessly screaming at the top of my lungs just to drown out the whispers. Without recognizing the Divine Feminine within, there is no balance in my life. Physical nourishment becomes such a small, severed tie in comparison to emotional and spiritual starvation. I have so many questions but continue to hold myself hostage for all the answers. Is earth still my body when I deprive it of nourishment? Is air still my breath when I am silenced by my own thoughts? Is water still my blood when I have bled my own heart dry? Is fire still my spirit when the spark behind my eyes begins to flicker out? So often I find myself left with no comfort, only confusion, and no relief, only heartache.

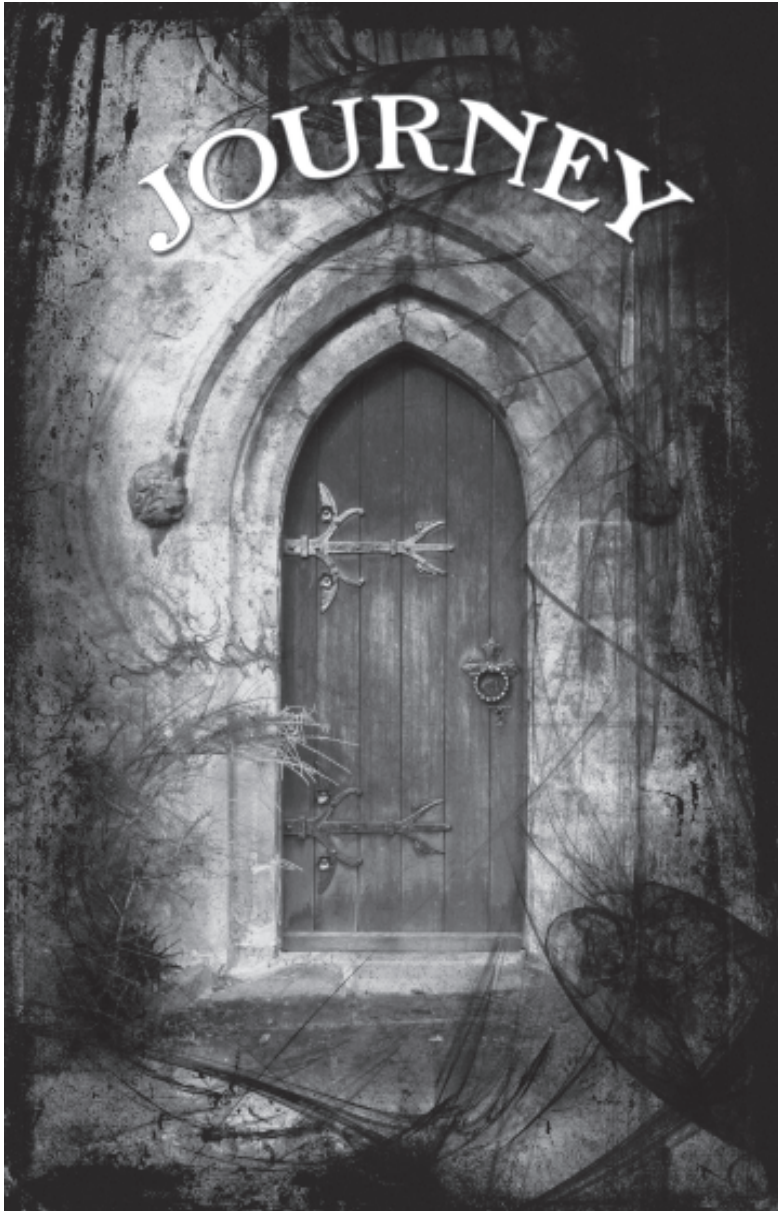
The Maiden is an Amazon, a Woman Warrior, who knows what is worth fighting for and what isn't. She takes pride in her ability to wield her battle sword, but also understands

the victory that comes with maintaining peace. Life's challenges are attempting to hold my own Amazonian spirit captive. Instead of peace, the inner war rages on, sweeping its flames outward to consume the world I once knew. I bow my head in guilt and shame as I continue to point my sword at myself. I am beyond torn; I am horrifyingly aware that my body has been reduced to the battlefield. My only power emerges out of the organized chaos of self-destruction. I purify myself with perfection and pain, timelessly enforcing punishment to my finite existence. My body is mortal, but my pain is immortal. My spirit is pounding against my insides, pushing and trembling to expand. I have no room to give it to flourish. I find myself immobilized, consisting of fighting pieces striving for a sought after whole. Everyday is a fight to live. Everyday I must gather all my inner strength to keep going. As my physical strength wanes, I question how much longer I can hold my own. My will to live is confronted with the overwhelming will to die. I expel compassion and contempt through the same breath. I am unsure if the Amazon can defend and protect others when she feels she failed to love and protect herself.

The Maiden is not only the brightness of spring; she is the nights of autumn and winter like the Crone. The Maiden is Queen of the Underworld. She confronts and welcomes into herself the joys along with the inescapable burdens of existence. The Maiden embraces change and lets her inner guide lead her on the path



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A Mother, Father and Child Reunion

by Jennifer Layton

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Last night was my Wiccan dedication ritual.

This morning, I'm different. Not overly so. I didn't start my morning by scrawling a pentacle on my forehead and then dancing naked in the woods around my apartment. That's not my style, and besides, getting evicted would be a rough way to start this new spiritual path.

Instead, I woke up after a peaceful sleep. It was raining outside. Instead of stressing out over the fact that I wouldn't be able to get in my morning jog, I took one of the candles from my altar

and sat on my screened-in patio. I lit the candle and asked the male aspect of the Deity I worship to join me. I thanked Him for the rain, especially since we've been having a drought. I thanked Him for the lovely morning and fresh air. I especially thanked Him for reaching out to me during my dedication the night before.

I was surprised at His reaction during the ritual. One of the reasons I am starting this new path is because of the difficult relationship I had with God during my Catholic upbringing. He always seemed angry and disapproving. He had to have everything just a certain way, and I was always doing it wrong. He seemed eager to punish and reluctant to show love. As comedian Lewis Black said, the God of the Bible really does come across like a raging alcoholic.

Last night, after my priestess friend, also named Jenn, cast the circle, I stepped forward with my dedication. I announced my decision to worship the same Deity of my childhood, except this time as God and Goddess, Male and Female, instead of an all-male Holy Trinity. I had spent my whole life in a church that had considered me just a little bit "less than" simply because of my gender. Instead of abandoning the male Deity out of vengeance, I simply wanted balance. I wanted to celebrate both sides of the one Deity I still believed in, Male and Female, working in harmony together, equal to each other, both loving me and leading me along a spiritual path together.

I read my dedication, which I'm printing below. Afterwards, I took a list of things I wanted to leave behind—fear of going to hell, my struggle with food, the ridiculous amount of overtime I've been doing at my job, and my unreasonable perfectionism—and burned it in the cauldron. Interestingly enough, the slip of paper with "perfectionism" written on it burned with more intensity than the others. At one point, we both glanced nervously at the smoke

alarm, but the flame eventually did settle down.

After the ritual, I felt peaceful and happy. And I noticed something. As Jenn was taking down the circle, the taper candle representing the God was reaching for the ceiling. The Goddess candle was burning normally, but the flame of the God candle was dancing and jumping. He was trying to get my attention. In a sudden moment of joy, I felt that He had heard my words, and, instead of being angry with me, He wanted to reconcile. He wanted this new relationship with me as much as I did.

Jenn snuffed out the Goddess candle first and then turned to the God candle. She held the snuffer over it for a couple of seconds, and the smoke died away. Then she lifted the snuffer. For a second, nothing happened. Then, the candle sprang back to life.

Jenn looked at me and said, “Are you seeing this?”

I was. The God was not ready to leave the ritual. Jenn did succeed in extinguishing the candle on the second attempt, but the flame still danced in my heart. I had expected the ritual to be mainly an introduction of myself to the Goddess and an invitation to Her to be a part of my life and spiritual journey. It had been that, and she had accepted, but the ritual had also turned into a reconciliation between me and the angry God of my childhood. The God and Goddess were now my one Deity, but for now, the God wanted alone time with me.

That’s why He was still with me this morning. And the Goddess, in Her loving wisdom, is giving us this time alone together. She knows I’m not ignoring her. She just knows that right now, as I begin this journey with her and her Partner, the most important thing is that He and I heal these wounds between us.

Blessed Be.

My dedication:

Heavenly Father:

I grew up Christian, calling you God. I have always belonged to you. I am always your child. That will never change.

This Christian journey has been a struggle, but it has brought me here. All my life, I have seen you as Father only, stern and unknowable only, unpredictable and somewhat bipolar only. And I have only known myself as unworthy of you and desperately in need of your

mercy. I know that you *are* merciful, but I know that you are also more than all this. You are more than the image I grew up with. You are more than the Bible. You are more than religion.

My Catholic upbringing taught me to see you as three entities—God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit—all referred to as male. I have spent my life trying to connect with that Trinity, with my only female role model being the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, who is too perfect for me to relate to, and, despite being deeply revered by Catholics, is still not equal with the Trinity. My gender, my soul, is not represented. It is minimized. In my heart, I have never believed that is what you intended.

I believe that Deity is unknowable. Therefore, every one of your children has to try to connect with you in his or her own way. I am here tonight to offer my heart and soul to you, the God of my childhood, and to formally change the way I will see you. Instead of three entities, I see you as two. You are Male and Female. God and Goddess. Lord and Lady. Two entities, one .

I do not worship the Earth. I cherish and care for it because you created it. You created the seasons and the phases of the moon and the ebb and flow of the tides. I have been disconnected from the natural world you created. Tonight, I vow to you that all that will change.

I will complete my first degree at Sacred Mists College. I will worship you as God and Goddess. I will grow closer to you through observance of the seasons, phases, ebbs and flows. I want to be a part of the nature you created, change with nature’s changes, and move with the sun, moon, wind, and ocean. You have made me your child, and now I want to be your child in spirit as well as name.

I dedicate myself to you, God and Goddess. Let’s continue this journey together on this path that may be thousands of years old but is still a new one for you and me.

If it harm none, so may it be.

Jennifer Layton is the Assistant Editor of Indie-Music.com and a first-year student at the College of the Sacred Mists. She’s been a freelance writer for over ten years. She lives in North Carolina and can be reached at jennifer@indie-music.com

She Lives in My Heart: Sharing the Path of the Goddess with My Daughter

by Jhenah Telyndru

“Like this, momma?”

“Just like that, dear one.” My three-year-old daughter was hunched down over the fuzzy tufts of a dandelion gone to seed, asking permission to pick it in hushed and respectful tones. After waiting a moment to receive her reply, Bryn looked up at me, beaming, and excitedly announced, “She said ‘yes,’ momma!”

I nodded at her, and then, carefully, with the focused intent that comes so naturally to young children, she picked the flower and clutched it excitedly to her chest, scattering some of the fluff in her enthusiasm. “What are you going to do with it now, bunny?” I asked.

“I’m going to send kisses to the Goddess!” She closed her eyes for a moment, puckered her rosebud lips and brushed them against the downy head of the dandelion. Then, with glee, she blew the seeds free and they took to the air around her as she giggled with delight. Living in an urban area as we do, I take pains to teach her about the natural world and its cycles. As subtle as the flowers that grow between the cracks in the pavement that send kisses to the Goddess, to the big beautiful moon that follows us home at night, making sure that we arrive safely, sharing the ways of the Goddess with my now six-year-old daughter has brought me immeasurable joy.

As a priestess with many years of dedication to the work of the Lady, I undertook my pregnancy as consciously as possible, connecting with the energies of the Great Mother and asking her blessing upon the miracle growing in my womb. When Bryn Starling was born by emergency c-section the day before the September 11th attacks, my world narrowed to focus on this tiny child, born into a world of uncertainty and facing struggles

of her own. She spent nine days in the Neonatal ICU, connected to tubes and machinery that dwarfed her new body, as she struggled to gain strength. Although my hometown had been

attacked, I could barely process

all that was going on in light of my breaking heart, as I

filled her tiny form with all the reiki I could muster in my own weakened state.

There is no pain like that of leaving the hospital without your child after having given

birth, and, though I grieved, I knew that there

were women who did not have the promise that their child would

soon be whole and home. I prayed for guidance and comfort and healing,

and in the end was granted my fondest desire—my dearest daughter came home to us, whole and healthy.

In the six years between then and now, there isn’t a day that goes by that I do not thank the Goddess for my daughter—truly my life’s greatest blessing. I consider it a deep honor and an awesome responsibility to guide this shining soul down her life’s journey of growth and experience until such time as she has claimed her full sovereignty as a woman, and with wings strong and eager to fly, she leaps eagerly from the security of the nest, ready to ride the currents of her own choosing. It is my hope that when that day comes, she will bring with her a solid moral foundation and a sense of herself that is so strong and centered, she will be able to ride out any storm and attain any height she seeks to reach.

In her life-changing book, *Circle of Stones: Woman’s Journey to Herself*, author Judith Duerk asks, “How might your life have been different if there had been a place for you? A place for you to go... a place of women, to help you learn the ways of



woman... a place where you were nurtured from the ancient flow sustaining you and steadying you as you sought to become yourself. A place of women to help you find and trust the ancient flow already there within yourself... waiting to be released... A place of women... How might your life be different?"¹

For my daughter and for the daughters of other women I know who are raising them to know the Goddess and to recognize their sacred natures as women, we are creating that place, even as—for most—there was no such place for us. How *would* my life have been different if I, like my daughter, had first entered into the warm enfolding darkness of a Maiden Sweat lodge when I was but three years old? If I had learned to seek my answers, and receive my validation, from within? If I had known that my experiences as a girl and a woman were sacred? If I had been encouraged to find my own way of expressing my connection to the Divine? If I had come to know that my body was beautiful, my emotions were powerful, and my ability to express myself, limitless?

One of the ways I have tried to support this sense of the sacred in my young daughter's life is to invite her to share in communal experiences of the Goddess in all-women settings. The yearly Womongathering festival in the Northeastern United States is a powerful place for such experiences. At her first Womangathering, in 2004, Bryn and I stood waiting outside the ritual space, surrounded by friends and strangers, all joined in our love for the Lady. My precious three-year-old walked along the path, picking up rocks and gifting them to the women around us. They were taken by her charm, and cherished the special stones she had picked especially for each of them.

Due to inclement weather, the opening ritual was held indoors, and we sat in the back of the large gymnasium because I was unsure how Bryn would do in such a large group of women and I didn't want to disturb the flow of the work. It turns out that I needn't have worried. She was completely taken in by the chanting and the drumming, and swayed along with the snake dancers as they blessed the sacred space. As each of the quarters was called, the group responded "Blessed Be" and in the silence that followed, Bryn called out "Blessings Be!" At the sound of her voice, hundreds of women turned around to see who owned the small confident voice, and smiled at this littlest priestess. With each quarter call, she responded "Blessings Be!" in her own space and time, eliciting smiles and laughter from all around.

Everyone knew and recognized her throughout the course of the rest of the festival. Dubbed the "Blessed Be Priestess", Bryn was approached and hugged by the many women who had been touched by her ritual participation, and I realized as the festival went on that just as Bryn was learning about the Goddess

and about her own spiritual nature, this very process was a source of teaching and opening and healing for the other women who were there. I had never been so proud to be known simply as "Bryn's mother" and it is a role I know I will always cherish and hold with joy in my heart.

To see the wonders of the Goddess through the eyes of a child is to see them as if for the first time. The leaves dancing spirals down a windblown lane hold that much more magick when a child delights in them. Paying attention to the cycles of the moon holds that much more mystery as you chart her ebb and flow with a sliver of a maiden at your side. Through my daughter's sense of joy and wonder, things I thought I had understood and mastered symbolically and intellectually have found their way into my soul to take root and grow anew, now infused with a sense of grace and deep beauty.

Recalling my own process when I first started down the Goddess path, I remember how difficult it was for me to learn to hear the voice of the Lady with clarity and discernment. It took time to unravel the tangle of my inner resistance, tied up as it was in issues of worthlessness and poor self-esteem. How different my experience would have been had I not spent so much time and energy in fighting myself and questioning my worth! I know that if I could give my daughter but one gift, it would be for her to trust her inner wisdom and fully realize her sacred nature by recognizing the source of Divinity lies nowhere but within.

One night as Bryn was getting ready for sleep, she looked up at the plaque of the Goddess that has been hanging above our family bed since the day she was born.

"Who is that lady, Momma?" She pointed up at the image that I had purchased because it evoked the energy of the Goddess for whom my daughter had been named.

"That's a picture of the Goddess," I answered.

"That's the Goddess?"

"No, sweetling! That's not the Goddess—just a picture of Her. It helps us to remember that She is always with us, looking after us and loving us."

"Oooh," she said, as if understanding.

I seized upon the moment. "Do you know where the Goddess really is?"

She looked up at the plaque and thought for a moment. "In outer space with the moon and the stars?" she asked, taking cues from the image above her.

I smiled, "No, my dearest. Not in outer space. The Goddess

lives in your heart.”

“In my heart?” she repeated, unsure of this new information.

“That’s right, in your heart. And any time you want to talk with Her, all you need to do is close your eyes, put your hands over your heart, and feel it fill up with love. Once you feel that nice warm love, you can talk to Her about anything. Try it!”

She closed her eyes and put her hands over her heart. “That’s it,” I encouraged her, “think of all the things that make you happy—drawing pictures, dancing, playing with the cats—everything you can think of. Now, think about all of the people you love and who love you—me, daddy, all your grandparents

There are wonderful resources available to help share the ways of the Goddess with young children. Some of my favorites include:

Starhawk, Diane Baker, and Anne Hill. *Circle Round: Raising Children in Goddess Traditions*, New York: Bantam, 2000

Hill, Anne. *Circle Round and Sing (CD)*. Sebastopol, CA : Serpentine Music

Johnson, Cait, and Maura D. Shaw. *Celebrating the Great Mother: A Handbook of Earth-Honoring Activities for Parents and Children*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1995

Darian, Shea. *Seven Times the Sun: Guiding Your Child Through the Rhythms of the Day*. North Liberty, IA: Gilead Press, 1999

Petrash, Carol, and Donald Cook. *Earthways: Simple Environmental Activities for Young Children*. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House, 1992

Lucy, Janet, and Terri Allison. *Moon Mother, Moon Daughter: Myths and Rituals That Celebrate a Girl’s Coming-of-Age*. Beverly, MA: Fair Winds Press, 2002

Sacred Source - www.sacredsource.com. Child-sized Goddess statuary and natural fiber Goddess dolls

and cousins and uncles and aunts—think about what it’s like to be kissed and hugged and snuggled all cozy and warm and feel that in your heart.”

As I spoke, I watched a smile spread across her face as she imagined all of these things. “How do you feel?” I asked.

“Good!”

“Great! That’s where the Goddess is—there in your heart! Now you can ask questions and talk to Her about anything you want.”

“Ok,” she said, and was quiet for a few moments. I noticed how her breath had instinctively become soft and rhythmic.

She opened her eyes and said, “The Goddess said that She is in your heart, too, Momma!”

Tears sprang into my eyes as I said, “Yes! Yes she is! She is in the heart of all living things.”

“Even my cats?”

I pulled her close and gave her a huge hug, “Especially your cats!”

It is hard to know how much a young child can understand of abstract concepts like Goddess and love, and what is meant by the heart. I have found that it is important to hold the space for these concepts and to reinforce them much as possible when opportunities present themselves. I am often amazed at the sophisticated level of thought of which a child is capable, especially when it comes to matters of the spirit. Perhaps it is because they are closer to the spirit world than are we, and hold memories of their soul’s true nature. Or perhaps it is that they have not yet learned the meaning of impossibility—a grace, I think, that it is a parent’s duty to protect. Still, even knowing this, I am often awed and humbled by my daughter.

“Momma, what’s wrong with Trees and Windows? She’s not swimming.” The inevitable question came sooner than I had hoped. My husband had won a goldfish for Bryn at a carnival the week before; she was quite taken with this little goldfish in a bag and named her “Trees and Windows.” We got a bowl for her with cobalt blue beads and a piece of coral to create a snug little home. We put the bowl in Bryn’s room and she proudly fed the fish every day. Now, this!

I followed Bryn into her room and saw that, indeed, Trees and Windows was no longer with us and was currently floating upside down in her bowl. Och! How to explain death to a three-year-old!

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Page 64

by Z Budapest

I am on page 64, got a respectable long paragraph, managed to get all my book titles in there. It's in the newly published thick book called *Feminists Who Have Changed America* by Barbara Love. I guess this is as far as a writer like me can go—this is the pink ceiling.

The years covered start with 1963-1975 (University of Illinois Press), the Second Wave. When I entered this time, I was 30 years old: right on the doorsteps of my Second Destiny.

I still have many clothes from that period, because I wear velvets and silks and they don't age. I wore everything from those times, turquoise silk shirt, green velvet pants, and a scarf from the 80s. I treat my clothes well, the good pieces are like a precious diary that tell the stories of my life. They are kept safely in my closet. I have the first t-shirt of the first Spiral Dance in L.A, circa 1976; the first t-shirt for my first festival I have produced. These are not just clothes but records.

At the Montclair Women's Club, we had a celebration produced by Margie Adam and Bo Price. There were 300 women, many of them in the new book, many friends, most of us had white hair, some of us were hardly recognizable.

"Hey Z, you look the same!" some women said, but I know they have checked my name card first. There isn't anyone who can defy the hand of time. I was still happy getting the compliments. But I answered, "Yes, fat don't crack."

As it happened, I sat next to Holly Near. Holly's voice has gotten even better, and it was always bells in her throat. Now she could carry a stadium without a mike. She was singing a new song, reverent today, about the war. A new verse, she has written, and sang with that magnetic voice. Margie Adam, oh she has never looked more handsome, now there is a woman

who has not gained an ounce since the seventies. Glorious in her triumph, she sang the last Hymn, We are in it for the LONG HAUL. Chilling, spine-tingling to know that somehow it's us. We have signed up and never let go, didn't tarry, kept it up and now we are feted as pioneers.

It's a strange thing to be part of a phenomenon. It's a generational thing. This group of boomers somehow took it upon ourselves to change the status of women for the better, and got away with it. I have introduced Women's Spirituality into the American psyche, replaced the old jealous and possessive god of the bible with a Great Mother who has ten-thousand names. It's spreading so well, I have no idea how many little woman "cells" there are who gather together with food and prayer and light candles to the Queen of Heaven.

May there be more than I can ever count.

To the over two-thousand women pioneers whose names are in this book, Blessed be! Well done!



Zsuzsanna E. Budapest was born in Budapest, Hungary. In 1971, she founded the Susan B. Anthony Coven Number 1, the first feminist Witches' coven, which became the role model for thousands of other

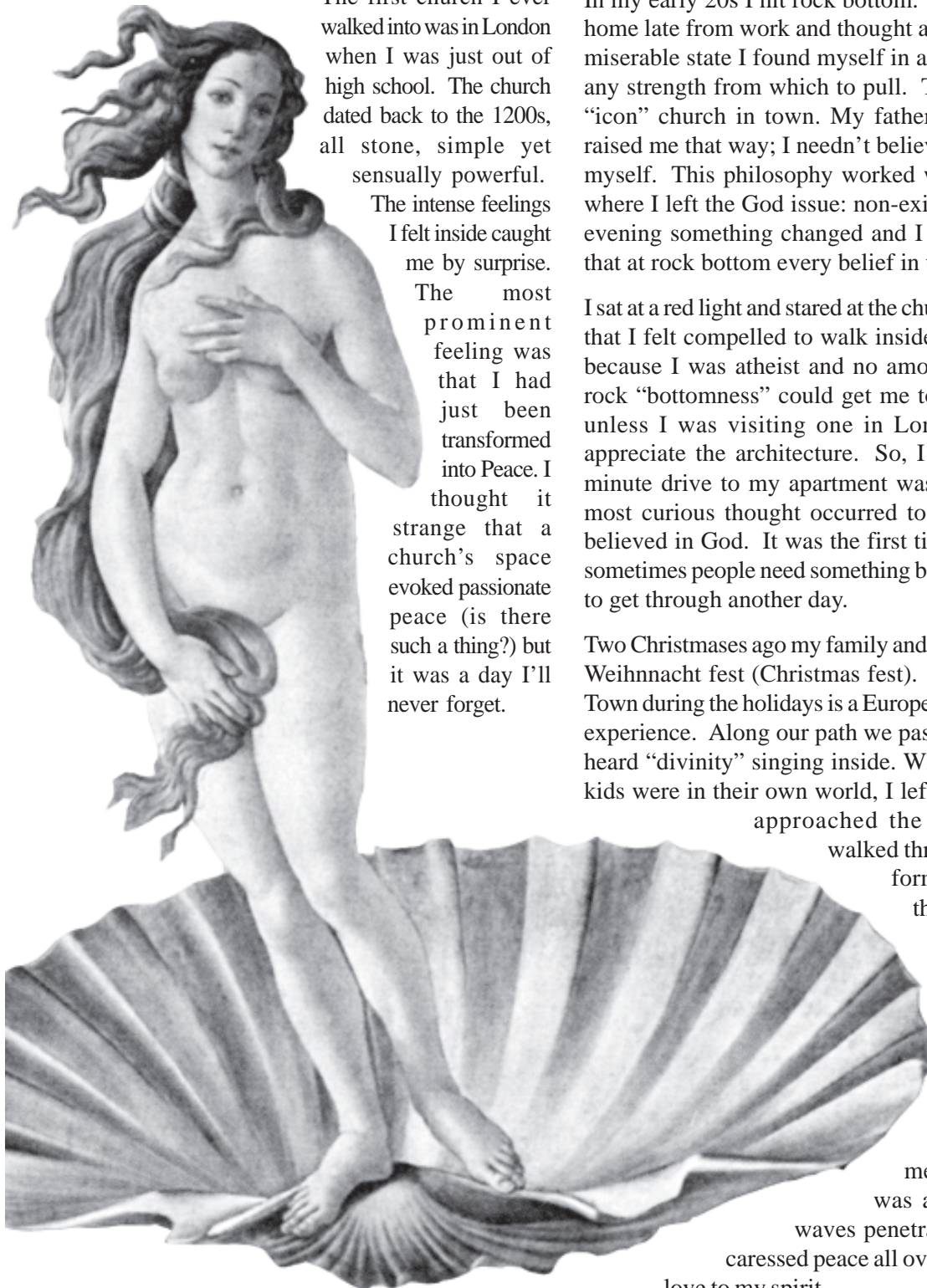
spiritual groups. Z has led rituals, lectured, taught classes, given workshops, written articles tirelessly, and published in hundreds of women's newspapers across the country. She has powerfully influenced many of the future teachers and writers about the Goddess.

Today Z lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, giving workshops and lectures, but always making time to smell the roses. The California Institute for Integral Studies recognized her as a foremother of the Women's Spirituality Movement.

She is the director of the Women's Spirituality Forum, a nonprofit organization sponsoring spirituality retreats. She teaches online at the Dianic University. She has written nine books and, in 2007, two of these will be republished: *Summoning the Fates* (Llewellyn) and *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* (Red Wheel/Weiser). Her website is www.zbudapest.com

Goddess in the Love Universe

by Tatiana von Tauber



The first church I ever walked into was in London when I was just out of high school. The church dated back to the 1200s, all stone, simple yet sensually powerful.

The intense feelings I felt inside caught me by surprise. The most prominent feeling was that I had just been transformed into Peace. I thought it strange that a church's space evoked passionate peace (is there such a thing?) but it was a day I'll never forget.

In my early 20s I hit rock bottom. One evening I drove home late from work and thought about the pathetic and miserable state I found myself in and how I didn't have any strength from which to pull. Then I passed a local "icon" church in town. My father was an atheist and raised me that way; I needn't believe in God but only in myself. This philosophy worked well for me so that's where I left the God issue: non-existent. However, that evening something changed and I consciously realized that at rock bottom every belief in the Self gets torn.

I sat at a red light and stared at the church's doors, horrified that I felt compelled to walk inside. I didn't of course, because I was atheist and no amount of depression of rock "bottomness" could get me to walk into a church unless I was visiting one in London as a tourist to appreciate the architecture. So, I drove on. The ten-minute drive to my apartment was an eternity and the most curious thought occurred to me: I wished I had believed in God. It was the first time I understood that sometimes people need something bigger than themselves to get through another day.

Two Christmases ago my family and I visited Heidelberg's Weihnacht fest (Christmas fest). Walking around Old Town during the holidays is a European Norman Rockwell experience. Along our path we passed a cathedral and I heard "divinity" singing inside. While my husband and kids were in their own world, I left and entered mine; I

approached the cathedral. When I

walked through the doors, tears

formed in my eyes and

that peaceful feeling I

had felt in London

appeared once

again. I stood

paralyzed, closed

my eyes and shut

off all my senses

except my

hearing. The sound

mesmerized me and it

was as though the sound

waves penetrated my soul as they

caressed peace all over my body and made

love to my spirit.

This past year, my husband took me to Mainz, again to Old Town (I have a strong fascination with the Old in Europe). The main church in the square was open and, since we hadn't seen it the last time we visited, I was curious about its inside look because the outside's architecture was stunning. I guess you can already assume what I'm about to say.

Walking in, I heard the Music of the Mass. To show how naive I really am about the whole church thing, I thought the music was a CD recording they played for visitors (don't laugh). It wasn't until we left that we saw the six or seven member choir walk past us in their robes; I blushed. Being intrigued by my past experiences with churches, I walked around listening to the melody that again seeped into my soul. I thought about life and, of course, God, because how could one not when in a church? I thought about Princess Diana of all things and wondered what it must have been like for her to get married in St. Paul's Cathedral with ceilings as tall as the one I was walking under, people staring at her. Then I walked down the aisle, imagining what she may have felt when walking towards her unknown destiny with promise standing ahead of her. Then I put that feeling into the back of my mind to use for a future story (do all writers put themselves in imaginary worlds for a better sense of a character's feeling?). When I looked at my path ahead while walking down that aisle, the sunbeams lit the cross and, while I question the whole divinity thing, I was mesmerized. I sat down and just stared, enveloped by peace and hypnotized by some indefinable presence of spirituality. My very being knew there was something we are a part of that is bigger and more powerful than we are. However, we are not servants to it. We are servants to ourselves.

I still don't believe in God, or at least in the traditional ways the concept is most often thought of. I do however believe that conscious awareness isn't only the product of chemicals or biology. There is something spiritual about the essence that gives us consciousness, the self-awareness we call "I." There is intelligence in it, creativity seeping from its source and love existing as *itself*, void of any ambiguous definition. It simply is and that cannot be described, but only felt, for authentic understanding.

The last time my life fell to pieces I didn't seek a church. Instead, I sought time for meditation because I've found the only "god" I need. She is a Goddess. The difference between then and now is that the relationship with "me"

has matured, developed and bloomed. I trust that inner voice within. She has become the voice that is my spirituality. And, though we all carry various views about what spirituality is, means or if it even exists, its very uniqueness is what I find intriguing and something respectable because that spirit or voice or soul or whatever it is that connects us to the *sense* of divinity is what we're all a part of: a Love Universe.

Judgment in the ambiguous definitions of personal spirituality is simply wrong. Different people are at different points in their lives. Some are more spiritual than others while some aren't spiritual at all. But to respect and find a way to communicate and work with those outside of our own circle of thought is a virtue. It's really the only way humanity can find mutual understanding. No matter how different our views are or the voices that speak from and to us about what spirituality is or means, we are connected on some "Planck Scale." That, if nothing else, should make us respect views different from our own because at the fundamental level, we are connected. Only when we expose ourselves to different styles of thought can we make more intelligible decisions about our world. Reason has its place, but without subjectivity, there would be little to reason. Peace and love cannot exist uniformly until there is respect for the various levels of thought that exist, particularly in terms of spirituality.

I have faith in myself in a way I never realized possible. It's a great place to be. The view is quite beautiful from up here and I feel like a Goddess of Love. At this stage, there's little to do but share, teach and cultivate it among those who are still searching for their mountaintop.

Tatiana currently resides in Frankfurt, Germany with her American husband and three children, freelancing in writing and photography between diaper changes and her personal and college studies in philosophy and psychology. Tatiana writes a monthly column for The Erotic Woman dot com and has been published in a variety of publications for her sex-positive feminist views and her erotic fiction. To learn more about her work and her philosophies about goddess power, visit her website at www.vontaubert.com



THEOLOGICAL MUSINGS



by Judith Laura

In a previous column, I discussed Emerging Goddess Figures in Christianity. I'd like to briefly update that here, and then go on to a more rarely discussed phenomenon, Goddess in Judaism.

In "Theological Musings" in *The Beltane Papers*, issue 36 (Autumn '05), I pointed out several figures in Christianity, including Mary Mother of Jesus, Sophia, and Mary Magdalene, who had taken on Goddess symbolism and significance. Since then, there has been additional growth of the interest in both Goddess and Mary Magdalene to the point that it's become nearly (but not quite) mainstream. For instance, Mary Magdalene's Feast Day (July 22) is observed in an empowering way by a number of Christian women's groups, including one at Brigid's Place in Houston, Texas, which also has a weekly feminist theology study group. And what's going

on at Ebenezer Lutheran Church in San Francisco is perhaps even more startling. There a special time is set aside each week for a "Goddess Rosary" service that is open to the public. While praying, the participants use rosary beads made by the Church's women's group that replace the usual Christian images with Goddess figures. You can see one of these rosaries on their website at <http://herchurch.org/id8.html>, which also quotes a variation of the "Hail Mary" by Carol Christ.

The emergence of Goddess images in Judaism is, to many people, at least as startling. Judaism is considered by some to be absolutely monotheistic, with the mono-theo being a transcendent deity who is spoken of as beyond gender but who is called "He" and "Him" (and adjectively "his") in English and whose descriptors in Hebrew are also male and masculine. So it may surprise many people that there is a strong movement among some Jews to incorporate either "the feminine divine" or "Goddess." This trend takes at least three forms: focus on the Shekhinah as the "divine feminine" or the "female face of God"; Jewitchery, which combines Jewish and Witchcraft traditions; and Goddess Judaism, which focuses on Asherah and sometimes also other ancient Near Eastern deities. Sometimes these three forms overlap—and individuals may be active in more than one.

The most traditional of these paths is the focus on the Shekhinah as the "divine feminine." Shekhinah is well within the conventional Jewish tradition, though how concretely feminine or even female She is varies among different types of Judaism and among individual Jews. In the Bible, Shekhinah is the "divine presence" or "presence of God," almost always seemingly ungendered, sometimes described, for example, as a cloud or a chariot. The description of Shekhinah as the "feminine face of God," or the "feminine aspect of God," is post-biblical and apparently began in the early centuries CE, especially in traditions related to Kabbalah or mystical Judaism. Today, most Jews are familiar with the Shekhinah as the Sabbath Queen, for whom the doors of the synagogue are symbolically opened during the Friday night sabbath service. Jewish congregations welcome Her with the Hebrew song, "L'cha Dodi," written by a 16th century Kabbalist. There are a number of slightly different English translations. After consulting several, here's how I would translate the refrain (in bold) and verses 2 and 9 (last verse):

Come my beloved to welcome the Bride, to receive

the Sabbath Bride.

*Let us go to meet the Sabbath,
from Her all blessings flow.
She was chosen from the beginning,
made last but planned first.*

***Come my beloved to welcome the Bride, to receive
the Sabbath Bride.***

*She comes in peace. She is the crown of her
husband.*

*In happiness and celebration with all the faithful,
Come O Bride! Come O Bride!*

Sabbath Queen!

Jewish feminists have built upon this conventional representation of Shekhinah, some to the point where Shekhinah becomes a Goddess figure. Recently, in California, under the leadership of Deborah J. Grenn, Ph.D., founder of the Lilith Institute, a group called Mishkan Shekhinah declared itself a Temple. Mishkan Shekhinah includes the worship of the “feminine divine,” often as the Shekhinah, in its services. Dr. Grenn has also started a priestess (in Hebrew, kohenet) training program in this tradition.¹ Meanwhile, in New York, Rabbi Jill Hammer, Ph.D., and Holly Taya Shere have begun a kohenet/priestess training program centered around the Shekhinah, which they describe as “embodied Jewish spiritual leadership, creativity and community from an earth-honoring, feminist perspective.”²

Another way Goddess has been combined with Judaism grows out of the participation of many people with Jewish backgrounds in contemporary Witchcraft. Calling themselves “Jewitches,” and their path “Jewitchery,” their focus is often mainly on magic, particularly the magical traditions within Judaism, sometimes combined with Wiccan traditions, and also often in incorporating deities from the ancient Near East, both female and male. In most instances, Jewitchery is not particularly focused on women’s or feminist issues.³

A more feminist-oriented path—and probably the most radical (in the very good sense of going to the “root”)—focuses on the ancient Near Eastern Goddess Asherah. Some people call this path “Goddess Judaism.” To a large extent it grew out of the 1970s feminist revelations about the lack of gender equity in traditional Judaism—and kept on growing. Today Goddess Jews, as well as interested non-Jews, work on establishing that the ancient Judeans



Asherah Enshrined by Judith Laura. The original full color version can be seen on <http://zazzle.com/judithlaura> The Hebrew on top can be translated “Blessed be Asherah.” On the star is The Hebrew for “life.” On the bottom the full title of the goddess, “Rabat Athirat Yam” is shown in Ugaritic cuneiform and loosely translated means “Great Lady Who Treads on Water” or “Great Goddess of the Sea.”

and Hebrews worshipped the Goddess Asherah (known elsewhere in the Levant as Athirat or Atirat), that this veneration continued through biblical times, and that, therefore, inclusion of the “divine female,” or sometimes the “feminine divine,” should be considered today within the Jewish tradition. A statement on the homepage of the yahooogroup Asherah at <http://yahoogle.com/group/Asherah> asserts: “Goddess is Jewish tradition.” This online discussion group includes a number of rabbis, scholars and authors. Among the books helping to establish the legitimacy of Goddess in Jewish tradition are *The Hebrew Goddess* by Raphael Patai (1967,1990), *In a Chariot Drawn by Lions* by Asphodel P. Long (1993),⁴ *Reinstating the Divine Woman in Judaism* (2000) by Jenny Kien, and *Did God Have a Wife?* by William G. Dever (2005). The latter, despite its flippant title, is a serious effort to present the strong archeological evidence that 99 percent of the ancient Judeans and Israelites worshipped the Goddess Asherah, along with

other deities.⁵ Members of the Asherah yahoo group, of which I'm listowner, have developed a Saturday morning Sabbath Service that honors Asherah and other traditionally Jewish divine female figures.⁶ You can read the entire service on <http://sab.judithlaura.com>. I'd like to close this column with a small excerpt from it:

The Divine is in all creation and all created exists in the Divine. Goddess flows through all creation, from the smallest particle to the largest galaxy; from the single cell to the individual plant, animal, and human. She interweaves all created, all created interweave with her, and She is the interweaving of creation. She is with each of us and all of us. She has been with us from the beginning, in every age; She is with us now and will be with us in all eons to come.

Asherah has been our Goddess, is our Goddess, and will be our Goddess. Asherah is with us eternally. Asherah holds us close and gives us strength. Asherah blesses us with peace.

In ancient times, She was robed in splendor and sheltered in a shrine. So today she reclaims her place in the Ark. For She is Torah, just as the law and the stories of our people are Torah. Our Mother Sarah was her priestess. Our mothers Rachel and Leah, and their daughter, Dinah, protected her. Solomon worshiped her in the Temple and called her Wisdom. In our exile, she remained with us as Shekhinah. Our grandmothers and great-grandmothers whispered her name in Yiddish and Ladino. She has also been called the Tree of Life, and as the Tree, the menorah is her symbol.

Mother of All Living, whose compassion knows no end, may your return to Zion heal our wounds, restore us, and bring balance to all creation. We place our faith in you, Great Goddess, who flows through all worlds.

[Ark is opened]

And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle; even the tent of testimony; and at evening it appeared as if fire was upon the tabernacle, until morning. (Numbers 9:15)

And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall

not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. (Isaiah 2:4)

And now we understand that the cloud of the Tabernacle was the Shekhinah, the holy presence of the Divine, who dwelled with our ancestors in the desert and showed them the way to safety. May She dwell with us always, keeping us safe and leading us to peace.

May the Divine Presence open our eyes to see truth, open our ears to hear all that is said, open our minds to Wisdom, and open our hearts to love. May we find the sacred in the teachings of our ancestors and reveal what we find therein without fear. May the truth make us free and whole.

References:

1. See <http://www.mishkanshekhinah.org> and www.lilithinstitute.org
2. See <http://www.telshemesh.org> and <http://kohenet.org>
3. See <http://yahoogle.com/group/Jewitchery> and <http://www.jewitchery.com>
4. Also see Long's essays on <http://www.asphodel-long.com>
5. I reviewed this book on <http://medusacoils.blogspot.com/2007/04/review-dever-book-about-asherah.html>
6. The material from the Goddess Sabbath Service used with here is copyright 2005 by Judith Laura. All rights reserved. Permission is given to use this material in actual rituals/liturgy. For other uses, see permission information on <http://sab.judithlaura.com>.

Judith Laura is author of *She Lives! The Return of Our Great Mother* (1989), *Goddess Spirituality for the 21st Century* (1997), and two novels, the most recent of which *Beyond All Desiring*, has received several awards. Her artwork is available on <http://cafepress.com/judithlaura> and <http://zazzle.com/judithlaura>. She has a tarot practice in the Washington DC, area, a website at: <http://www.judithlaura.com>. Judith blogs at <http://medusacoils.blogspot.com>



It is time to apply in the arena of the world the wisdom and experience that women have gained over so many thousands of years.
~ Aung San Suu Kyi - Nobel Laureate

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out of the underworld. The goddess Demeter repeatedly walks this Earth each winter in sorrow, waiting for her daughter, the Maiden Persephone, to return from her time in the underworld. Maybe I most resemble the Maiden in her shadowy and deathly aspect. My mother continues to mourn the loss of her daughter. She waits for me to return from the depths of my own gloomy underworld. The pomegranate seed, the food for the dead, cannot be my only form of sustenance or nourishment.

The Maiden is the new dawn of every morning I have the chance to continue to open my eyes to. Through all the frustrating conflict and disorder, the Maiden does give me a touch of intangible hope. I am the only one who can loosen my earthly chains and embark on the journey out of the abyss. I am the one who can set sail on my Maiden Voyage in the direction of life. Only when I can look back on the journey of reclaiming my body and my connection to the Goddess and the earth, will I know that I have officially arrived at the destination my soul has always searched for and finally discovered.

Alanna Muniz, a senior at the University of Washington in Seattle, is currently completing her major in Women Studies and her minor in Anthropology. Her passion for women's history and women's spirituality has led her on a journey into the enticing mysteries of the Goddess, Wicca, and Bellydance.

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I gathered her close, "Honey, I am afraid that Trees and Windows has died."

"Died?"

"Yes, love. She's gone back to the Goddess—all that is left now is her body"

She shed some tears as we took her out of the bowl and reverently committed her fishy body to the mystic watery spiral of rebirth, also known as the toilet.

I took the empty bowl out of her room, and Bryn stayed behind because she wanted to spend some time alone. After a while, she came back to me and said, "Momma, I don't have to miss Trees and Windows."

"You don't? Why not?"

"Because she is my heart. She went back to the Goddess and the Goddess is in my heart so that's where Trees and Windows is too."

My goodness! What a complex theological leap for such a young child! I was pleased and amazed that she had been able to integrate the things I was trying to gently teach her, and that she was able to use this as a source of comfort. Too, it spoke of a recognition of the interconnectedness of all things, an understanding of which I believe is the foundation for a life lived in harmony and respect for the Earth and all who dwell on her.

I am learning, too, that the presence of the sacred Now is a child's constant companion. My daughter doesn't need to think about honoring the essence of life—it is second nature for her to be thankful for the gifts of leaves, flowers and acorns, to blow kisses of thanks to the Sun for its warmth or to give hugs of kinship to every tree as we pass. The beauty of walking the path of the Goddess with Bryn is that I find myself opening in places I've never considered possible in my own life, and I am learning to see and explore the world in a whole new way. Whether we are looking for faeries among the wildflowers or thanking the crickets for their twilight song, I am healing old wounds of limitation and birthing myself anew through the gift that is my daughter.

I love to watch her when she is completely immersed in her inner world, unaware of my presence and lacking any shred of self-consciousness. She makes fairy houses out of stones and branches when we are in the country on her grandmother's land, and bakes magical pies and cookies to leave for their tea parties. She likes to rearrange the altar we created in her room, moving around all of the various leaves, shells and dried flowers with which she has adorned it, talking to the wooden carving of the Goddess holding a baby ("That's me with the Goddess before She put me in your belly!" she once told me) and counting the tumbled gemstones as she drops them one by one into her small cast iron cauldron. I love to kiss her while she is sleeping, drawing the covers around her as she snuggles the purple Goddess rag doll that was one of her first gifts.

I thought I knew the meaning of joy until the first time I heard the familiar strains of "We All Come from the Goddess" pass between my small daughter's lips—I have often sung her to sleep with this chant, and we've sung it together as we played our drums. But this was the first time she sang it alone and spontaneously, and while it may be a mother's bias, I know I have never heard it sung more beautifully or with more meaning than in her sweet scratchy baby voice. "This is my favorite

song, Momma!” she announced as she danced in circles around me

“Mine too, sweetheart. Mine too.”

Reference

¹ Judith Duerk, *Circle of Stones: Woman's Journey to Herself* (San Diego, CA: LuraMedia, 1989), 4.

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THE PLEIADES

The Pleiades are a group of bright stars that are in the constellation of Taurus. The Pleiades are a prominent sight in winter in the Northern Hemisphere and in summer in the Southern Hemisphere. You can find them by following the belt of Orion through a reddish star called Aldebaran.

In Greek mythology, the Pleiades were seven sisters: Maia, Electra, Alcyone, Taygete, Asterope, Celaeno and Merope. In one myth, the Pleiades were the virgin companions of Artemis, to the ancient Greeks, the goddess of hunting and the Moon.

The Monache Indians of the American west saw in the Pleiades a group of wives who were excessively fond of eating onions and were thrown out of their homes by their angry husbands. Repenting in their loneliness, the husbands sought after their wives, but they had wandered away into the sky, becoming the Pleiades.

The ancient Aztecs of Mexico and Central America based their calendar upon the Pleiades. Their calendric year began when priests first remarked the asterism rising heliacally in the east, immediately before the sun's dawn light obliterated the view of the stars.

In Japan, the Pleiades are known as Subaru, and have given their name to the car manufacturer whose logo incorporates six stars to represent the five smaller companies that merged into one. In Chinese constellations, they are Mao, the Hairy Head of the white tiger of the West, while the name of the Hindu God Kartikeya means him of the Pleiades.

Only six stars are distinctly visible to the naked eye. The ancient Greeks explained the sudden disappearance of the seventh star in various narratives, one being the myth of the Electra, an ancestress of the royal house of Troy. After the destruction of Troy, the grief-stricken Electra abandoned her sisters and was transformed into a comet – everafter to be a sign of impending doom.

The Greek legends of the disappearing star are echoed in Jewish, Hindu and Mongolian folklore: their basis in an actual event seems to be corroborated by astronomical evidence that a clearly visible star in the cluster became extinct towards the end of the second millennium BCE.



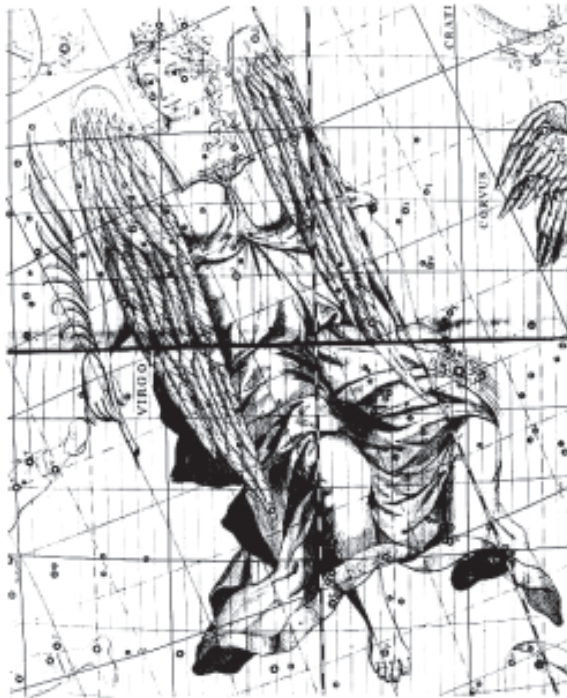


Samhain Yule Imbolc Ostara Beltane Litha Lughnasadh Mabon

Virgo the Virgin

For this issue, Virgo the Virgin chose to guide us. Virgo is both an astrological sign and an astronomical constellation. She is unique among all the signs in that She is a goddess, not an animal or a human. As the constellation, Virgo is the largest in the zodiac and the second largest of all the constellations. Her constellation is one of three which represent goddesses. The others are Andromeda and Cassiopeia. Together, these can be seen as the three aspects of the feminine: maiden, mother and crone.

In very ancient times She is associated with agriculture and the harvest. Star maps of old depict this constellation as a winged goddess holding a palm branch in Her right hand and stalks of wheat in Her left. The star denoting Her left hand is named Spica, meaning ear (kernel) of grain in Latin. The ancient Egyptians used a palm frond stripped of its leaves to mark the passage of years, symbolizing her relationship with the natural. To these people, this constellation was Isis, the Great Mother, the serpent under Her feet and a crown of stars on Her head. In Her arms She carries a sheaf of grain and sometimes the young Sun God. In Mesopotamia She is Sala, goddess of fertility and agriculture. She is the Virgin Mary of the Christian myths.



In Greece She was Astraea (who is depicted with a torch and wings) or Dike, daughter of the primordial Titan Themis, goddess of Divine law. Dike was the goddess of justice, fair judgments and the rights established by custom and law. Most likely She inherited these qualities from Her mother. She was also one of the Horai, goddesses of the seasons, and keepers of the gates of heaven. When Dike felt that mankind no longer respected justice, She retreated to the mountains and later abandoned the earth for the sky, becoming the Virgin.

In Rome She was recognized as Justitia, Lady of Justice. It is in this form that we recognize Her today. She is most often depicted with a set of weighing scales typically suspended from Her left hand, reminding us of Ma'at who is charged with regulating the stars, seasons, and the actions of both mortals and gods. Justitia is also seen carrying a double-edged sword in Her right hand, symbolizing the power of Reason and Justice, which may be wielded either for or against any party. It is also likely that our Lady Liberty is also based upon this goddess. This goddess is still one of the most prevalent images in western societies, gracing courthouses around the world.

DAUGHTER OF APHRODITE

by Caroline Tully

According to the ancient Athenian calendar—which, as a Hellenic Reconstructionist Pagan,¹ I follow—the fourth day after the dark moon each month is dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite, beautiful mistress of love and sexuality. A powerful deity whose domain in antiquity stretched from the Near East to Magna Graecia and beyond, Aphrodite was worshipped by all aspects of society. A goddess considered so potent, so pervasive, that not only did She feature in the celebrated literature of the day—the epics of Homer—she was considered to be directly responsible for starting the Trojan War. Remember, both Helen *and* Paris were beloved of Aphrodite!



As a student and sometime wanna-be dedicant of Aphrodite, I believe in love as a physical, carnal, wild force—represented by the Goddess of Love—although I do not claim to understand its mystery nor to competently control its attracting power. Indeed, I aspire to worship Aphrodite in fact, as a sort of placatory gesture directed toward her—I have spent many more years being the victim of her wiles than I have in embodying any sort of role as mistress of her realm. Sometimes I have felt to be almost persecuted by her—the way she makes me weak, smitten and goo-goo over some unremarkable man, against my will. . .

Research and practical experimentation have convinced me that the religious forms and methods of the ancient Greeks were valid and that they can be effective and meaningful today. So, when the religious impulse strikes me—as it does every so often—and I feel the need to step into the liminal realm of the gods, I perform a thank-offering to Aphrodite for all the things she has given me—even those things that I haven't asked for, and that have caused me pain (I suffer to learn!). I also ask for her continuous blessing and that she direct me towards a

deeper understanding of her nature.

The way I go about formal worship is to first make a beautiful place for the Goddess' epiphany: I set up an altar in my garden, place an image of Aphrodite upon it along with scallop shells (she was born from the sea); goat figurines (buck goats are sacred to Her); libation bowls filled with wine, oil and barley; a candle; a censer with frankincense incense; flowers and a bowl of lustral water for pre-ritual washing. I also dress in diaphanous robes and jewelry and wear make-up, because Aphrodite is concerned with indulgent display, not austerity.

At the altar I wash my hands with the water and sprinkle my surrounds. Next I strew barley

upon it as an offering symbolising the gifts of the earth. I light a candle representing the hearth goddess, Hestia—who is always honored first in Olympian religion—and pour some wine to her. Then I read the two Homeric Hymns to Aphrodite—I believe the Goddess enjoys hearing them, and they also give me insights into her character. I subsequently pour libations of wine to Aphrodite and to two of her handmaidens, *Peitho* (persuasion) and *Ambologera* (remover of old age).

Sometimes I break out of a strictly Reconstructionist ritual mode and recite the following contemporary invocation/prose-poem to Aphrodite, written by performance artist Joanna Frueh:

Venus Verticordia, changer of hearts, look me straight in the eye, then hug me, then look me in the eye again. Tell me stories about your ancestor, Aphrodite, our mother of Eros, whose child—his name, his works and play—have usurped Aphrodite's authority.

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G A I A ' S

T A B L E

by Denise Bell

Whether you're a Kitchen Witch, Hedge Witch or Dianic, one thing almost all of us do is celebrate the ever changing Wheel of the Year. A simple way to do this is cooking the freshest gifts of the season from Gaia's Table.

Instead of trolling through big box grocery stores that will sell you "fresh" tomatoes in the middle of a December snowstorm, head for a local farmer's market or family-owned produce stand. Ask the farmer himself or herself when the produce was harvested. The answer may be measured in hours, and certainly within days, instead of a week or more (presuming a

grocery clerk could even tell you this information). This is also the place to ask about organic and sustainable practices. The easiest way to be an activist in today's global economy is by eating local organic seasonal food.

As I'm sitting at my dining table writing this column, I can tell you my refrigerator bins hold vegetables and fruit bought at Saturday's market; fresh broccoli, purple sweet onions, fava beans, yellow crookneck squash, and red carrots. But by the time you are reading my list of enticing menu choices, those delicious items probably won't be available fresh at your farmer's market and certainly not mine. Instead you're likely to find huge piles of one of my favorite food items—peppers. There will be anchoes, chilis, and habaneras but also a dizzying array of bell peppers. Bell peppers, while seemingly humble amidst the more spicy cultivars, come in rainbow colors from bright yellow, orange, and red to a deep purple and forest green (which is generally considered an unripe pepper). Before you choose your peppers at the market—stand back and enjoy Nature's color play.

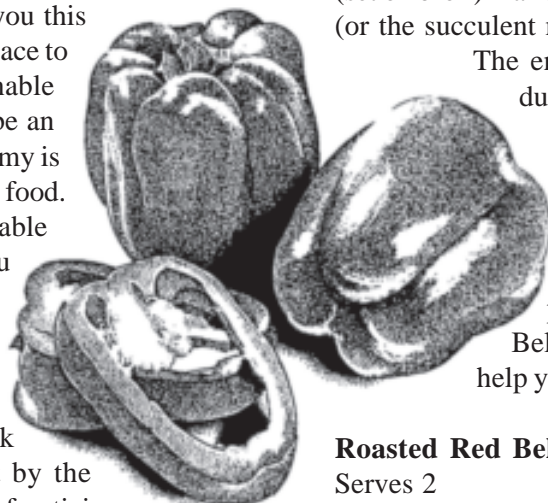
While all the bell peppers are great fresh, they are also easy to roast and/or freeze. Remove the stem and ribs, and then shake out the seeds. The body of the pepper can be cut in four to six parts and tossed in a plastic freezer bag. When you're ready to cook with them, remove what you need from the bag and save the rest

for future use. Rinse them with cool water and chop to liven up almost any vegetable or meat dish.

My favorite way to use peppers is to roast the red bell peppers. They're an incredibly delicious item that shows up on almost every restaurant menu in some extravagant dish. This flavorful ingredient is easily achieved, especially when you buy them fresh in the summer or fall. Clean the peppers by removing stem, ribs and seeds. Cut the shells in half and finger with a bit of virgin olive oil. Place these on a cookie sheet, skin side up. The roasting can occur either on the grill or in your oven (set on broil)—allow them to blister but not overly char (or the succulent meat of the pepper will be wasted).

The entire house will smell breathtaking during this process! When you remove the peppers put them in a brown bag until cool, then peel the blistered skin from the pepper and discard. Enjoy them now and, if any remain, save them for later by layering with wax paper and freezing.

Below are two of my favorite recipes to help you enjoy Gaia's Table.



Roasted Red Bell Pepper Soup

Serves 2

2 red bell peppers
1 small onion
2 cloves garlic
1 small tomato
1 cup Half & Half
1 cup plain yogurt
Salt & white pepper to taste

Roast red bell peppers with onion, garlic and tomato.

Peel tomatoes and peppers when cooled. Puree red bell peppers with onion, garlic and tomato in blender until liquid. Add dairy products, salt and pepper and blend well. Serve with a small dollop of yogurt and sprinkle of fresh basil or mint.

Guacamole with Roasted Peppers

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Lore of the Star Goddess



by Rachel Plassman
illustrations by Becky Munich

Humankind always watched the stars. We are fascinated by them; they call to us. We build monuments to them, write endlessly about them, gaze up at them in holy rapture. So it is with my chosen Goddess and the relationship I have with her. She is the Star Goddess, and she has been there for me since times before remembering, even when I wasn't aware of her. In searching for more information about her, I have seen that we modern folk do not have very many names to call her by. There are many Goddesses and Gods that are said to be *in* the stars, such as Orion the Hunter, or be embodied *as* a star, such as Morning Star of many Native American legends. But so far I have found few who *are* the stars in their vast entirety. When I see a lack I want to fill it, so I am setting down my own knowledge about her here.

One group of people who knew the Star Goddess were the Egyptians, who called her Nuit or Nut. She embodied the sky, particularly the night sky. Arching over the Earth God Geb in eternal embrace, she had many symbols attributed to her, all related to the sky and night. She was often depicted with blue or black, star-speckled skin.

Amaterasu, the compassionate Japanese goddess of the sun, is also related to the Star mother. So is Grandmother Spider of certain Native American myths. But most

deities related to the sky are just related to the sky of Earth, not the universal sky that surrounds all planets, races, and peoples. And they say nothing of the void between galaxies, the awesome vastness of the universe, the fire and color that can only be found beyond our atmosphere.

Since my outward searches have yielded little, I will offer what I have found in my inward ones. In my imaginings, she is a nebulous face formed by galaxies. Her hair is made of comet-trails and clouds of interstellar dust. Her eyes flash like supernovae, yet she smiles as we gaze up to her face, reach out to her interplanetary depths. Sometimes great, misty wings spring from her shoulders, encompassing the universe. She protects and guides travelers, sailors of the skies and sea and stars. She is patroness of astronauts, most of all. Her element is darkness, but she is far from evil. Her darkness is a comfort and a refuge, a warm cloak to wrap up in. Her element is also light, but only when set against darkness for contrast. Her colors are any colors in the stellar spectrum. She can be Maiden, Mother, or Crone as she pleases, but most of

the time she appears as Mother, because she is the Source of all, the beginning and the end.

When we look out into the depths of the night sky, from our safe little cocoon of rocky mantle and atmosphere, she is there looking back at us. Far from being distant and aloof, she surrounds us always. For though we are far from the stars and other worlds, we are also out among them, all the time. At night we can see the proof. We are only having trouble, at the moment, hopping off our particular rock and wading out into the oceans of night. I find her to be a very personal Goddess. When I am worried about something she helps me find perspective, seeing my troubles for what they really are. She lends a strength I can find nowhere else. She speaks to me of deep knowings, buried memories that are just now breaking ground and turning their faces to the sky.

When we communicate I don't hear a voice with my ears, but rather with my heart. When I ask for help I often feel a sense of abiding peace, and perhaps an unexpected solution. When I was younger I wanted to feel the touch of the Gods—any God—and looked in vain. I thought I did, anyway, but the stars were always there, waiting. Gradually I came to feel a presence, a touch, in the dark of the night. And I wondered who this Lady was, but I could find no name. Still, she led me out

of more than one deep depression, lifting me up and keeping me safe. Eventually she led me to information about Nuit, and also told me about her oldest, most well-known name, which is simply the Star Goddess. I came to find that I loved her deeply and wanted to serve her in spreading my own light, so much like a pinpoint star in the velvety depths that may guide a weary traveler. As her devoted follower, my highest goal is to be a bearer of Light, to help others, to bring them hope, to serve what is Good in all the worlds.

“How can one be at once a part and All?” That very question was what might have led me to her most surely. For I found my answer looking up at the stars. First I felt connected to the ground under my feet, standing in my backyard at night. The sky was clear and beautiful. Even my imperfect eyes could show me that, through thick lenses and tiny muscle twitches. I thought about our Sun, which was currently warming the other side of the planet, and realized that all those stars were Suns in their own right—some larger, some smaller. This gave me perspective. I felt my mind reaching up, and I realized that I wasn’t looking up but out, and all the light coming to me was coming from distances so incredibly far away that

I was actually seeing into the *past*... I knew that this planet I was standing on was circling a star and the star was making its own orbit within a galaxy and that galaxy was tracing a path among other galaxies, circles within circles within circles, worlds within worlds without end. And in all that incalculable Space, there I still stood, a tiny speck traveling aboard a slightly larger speck. In the scheme of things, I was but an atom. But at the same time, I saw that there is still importance, worth and beauty in every living being we walk, swim, and fly among. And I knew that my mind could encompass all of this, understand it, reach out to it, be One with the All. I was also an infinitesimal part of it, just as important as any other. The question I began with was answered, and I

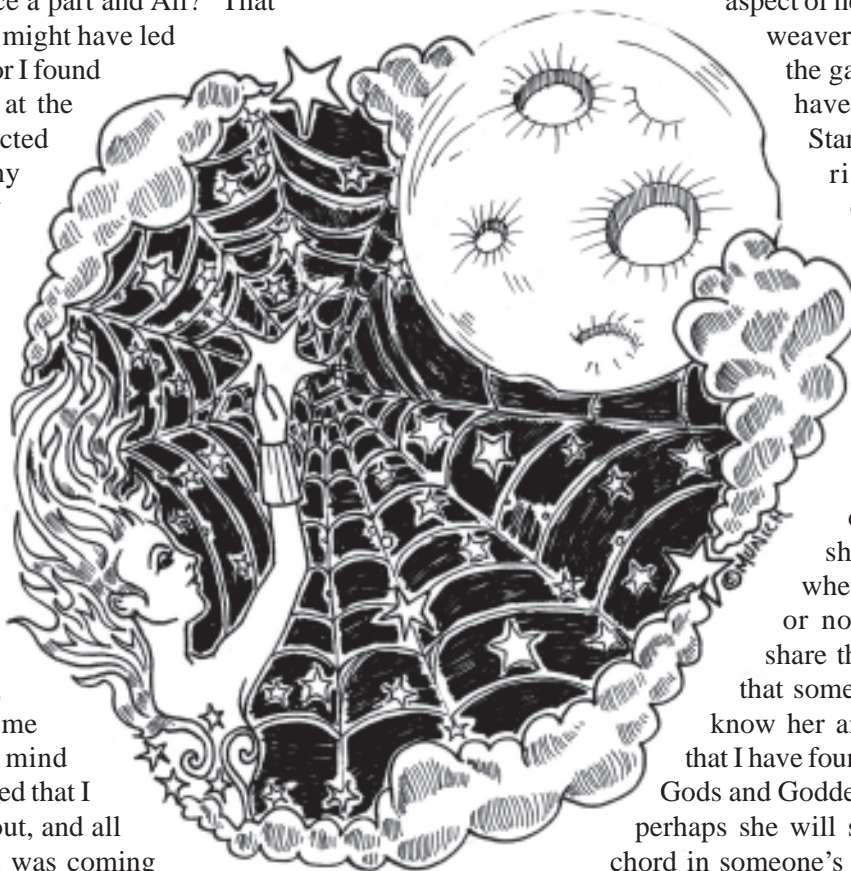
was forever changed. Unknowingly, I had actively begun a relationship that would continue for the rest of my days. I believe I couldn’t have been more than eleven. It wasn’t until later that the full significance of that realization was brought home to me, but the seeds were planted in that time, that place, for me to meet the Mother face to face and know her for what she was.

Later, I was searching for the name of my patroness and finally found her through the guise of Nuit. And by a few other

names. Grandmother Spider is an aspect of her in my mind, that weaver of light who spins the galaxy as her web. I have come to call her Starmother in my own rituals. There are endless variations. I feel her calling in my bones, the core of what I am, and I feel her constant presence. Sometimes it is veiled, as if by clouds, but I know she is always there whether I can see her or not. And I want to share this with others, so that some few can come to know her and feel this peace that I have found. There are many Gods and Goddesses out there, but perhaps she will strike the specific chord in someone’s heart that will fill the void within them with warmth and light. It

is one way I have of perhaps providing a point of light for some other wanderer to be guided by, as many have done for me.

If you want to meditate on her and attempt to connect with her energy, you have but to look within yourself, for she is there. As the sun, she is personal and life giving. As the stars, she is eternal. I find sometimes that it helps to meditate with a meteorite or tektite, anything that is from off this planet. Go to her with honesty and love and she will return it many times over. Meditate on the vastness of the universe, stare out into the stars, and you will find her too. If you can’t see the sun or stars (as is often the



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CREATING GRIDS, A FIFTH DIMENSIONAL TOOL FOR HEALING YOURSELF, YOUR ANIMALS AND THE PLANET

by Flash Silvermoon

Are you willing to approach the possibility of creating a miniature temple for you and yours that can not only offer you elevation of the body, mind and spirit, but can also actually facilitate healing?

Are you willing to walk that Rainbow Bridge into the magical, mystical world of the Fifth Dimension, the place where the miraculous can unfold...if you believe?



To do this, we are required to entertain a “beginner’s mind,” that is, to approach these concepts as a willing, curious child open to wonder and magic!

Spirit is clearly telling me in every way that if I am to write about the Fifth Dimension, then I must also live it. As I write, I am daily given opportunities of how to live more attuned to this space and it is one of profound peace.

What Is the Fifth Dimension?

This is not the remixed and remastered version of retro hits from the ‘60’s band. However, the seeds of this consciousness were no doubt planted and nurtured during that decade of spiritual unfolding.

The wonderful influx and infusion of Eastern culture during those times had a transforming effect on the Westerners who hungered for a glimpse of Nirvana (again, the concept, not the band)!

The Fifth Dimension represents a realm where all exists in Oneness with Spirit. When healing from this realm, all things are possible and anything can be regenerated.

To understand and embrace the Fifth Dimension, one must open oneself to the world of the miraculous, the place beyond limitations of gravity, time and logic. Because we are spiritual beings living on the material plane, we must also negotiate a balance between these seemingly incongruent paradigms.

Allowing this Fifth Dimension consciousness to anchor

and become real is not without risk, but the rewards are enormous and have the potential to elevate the planet beyond its dangerous collision course.

So what is the risk? When you open to the miraculous, you may appear foolish to those who only worship the God of logic and material reality. One can be accused of not being realistic or worse...insane when one clings to hope when only a minute margin for such exists. In fact, keeping hope alive in the face of deadening apathy, fear and repression is one of the most reasonable things that we can all do.

I do believe that we CO-create reality with our thoughts and this is most empowering because it puts change and transformation in our hands if we are willing to meet the challenge. When we align our wills with something more universal, positive and bigger than ourselves, we surrender the little I for something much better. It has been proven by scientific research that the vibration of many holding a single positive thought can be influential on a profound level. Leaders from the Dalai Lama to the Pope know this and harness the power of prayer and meditation to positively influence reality or, rather, one of the realities.

In his groundbreaking book about the Magic of Water, Dr. Emoto illustrates in graphic detail the effect of positive energy on water, showing microscopic pictures of water that has been abused and healed by sound, word and deed. If we can change a glass of water with positive thought and energy and we are made up of 90% water, then the obvious miraculous results for the human body, mind and spirit are inevitable.

This may seem like a tremendous leap of consciousness for some and a welcome possibility for others.

I invite you to join me on a journey that will be both joyful and profound. Hopefully you will find the experience transforming for you and the animals in your world.

I believe that many of you have been experiencing the vibrational shift that has been occurring which some call a “quickening,” a speeding up and elevation of our energies. For most of us, life as we have known it is being transformed on many levels, not the least of which is the weather. If your terra firma seems not quite as firm as you thought, congratulations, as you are not asleep or in denial.

Even astrological aspects and various and sundry holistic cures do not necessarily hold the line and deliver predictable results. Everything is in a state of flux.

I find that working on the etheric level with flower essences, crystals, stones, homeopathics, and gem elixirs to be very helpful as long as you don’t go strictly by the book (which *is* useful) and also follow your intuition. In this way, you use both hemispheres of the brain.

With clients as well as with my own healing, treating ailments on a purely physical level, even with holistic means, can ground the symptoms deeper into the physical body. Approaching these same problems on the Fifth Dimensional or spiritual level, can offer space for miracles to happen.

By viewing symptoms from a vibrational perspective, profound changes can occur. This may seem supernatural and that’s exactly what it is.

Within our bodies and spirits, the portions of us that are in a state of Oneness and harmony vibrate at a much higher frequency. Where we hit pockets of denser vibration, we find illness and malaise. In these dense places, fear and ego dwell, leaving us vulnerable. By raising the vibratory speed, you create a channel by which anything can be healed.

One way to access Fifth Dimensional Healing is through a “Grid.” There are many types of grids and each and every one creates a vortex where these higher energies can be utilized.

How to Construct, Use, and Maintain a Grid

To construct a grid, you need several things:

- 1-A clear space to create your grid
- 2- A plain or colored piece of unlined paper where you will draw a circle or a heart in the center. You will place your name (all of the names you are known by including magical ones) in the center. Also place the letters E for East, S for South, W for West, and N for north in their proper place around the circle or heart.
- 3- A pendulum—this ideally is a crystal or stone on the end of a chain, string, etc., but many things could be suspended from a cord or chain as well. I find that metal is a better conductor. The pendulum is the main tool and could be used as often as once a day to check your grid and each of its components to maintain its effectiveness and to monitor and create changes. My pendulum swings clockwise for “yes” and counterclockwise for “no.” Others may find that a “yes” is shown by the pendulum swinging forward and a “no” by its swinging side to side.
- 4- At least four stones or crystals chosen by you and your pendulum.
- 5- Optional—feathers, shells, herbs, or your own flower essence mix.

To set up your grid: Avoid close proximity to windows. With the aid of your pendulum, ask “Is this the perfect stone for this position right now?” The words “right now” are crucial as any stones might be good but you want the ones that are what you need in the moment. Go through each of the four Directions starting in the East, corner of New Beginnings, asking that question and then placing the appropriate stone.

Let’s say that you have a small clear or citrine quartz crystal for this position. These stones are good for clarity, which is always a good beginning but not necessarily the thing for everyone.

Check to see if the point goes in or out with the

pendulum. With all of these questions, your own intuition may be way out in front so use the pendulum for confirmation. Sometimes the position of these stones can change from day to day if it is a time of high stress or change.

Next, go to the South, corner of fire, love and innocence, the Place of the Heart. You might choose a piece of rose quartz or something else pink or green (heart chakra colors) for that purpose.

The West, corner of the Dreamtime and the deep inner waters, might need apophyllite, amethyst, Herkimer diamond, or even smokey quartz or black tourmaline if you have felt under attack in these realms.

Finally you would choose the stone for the North—corner of the earth and Manifestation. Think about the energy that you want to manifest or ground. For grounding you might use smokey quartz or if you want to manifest a new love, you might use rose quartz or even the more exotic Aphrodite. With each of these stones, you would also make sure that you are choosing the right piece if you have several.

Sometimes, a center stone is necessary also so you would hold your pendulum over that spot and ask if it needs a stone. If the answer is “yes,” then again choose with your pendulum to see what is central energetically for you.

Once that you have made your grid, you can check it daily or more frequently if there is an acute problem. Don't worry if you miss a day but do get into the habit of checking. I always check my flower essence combo first as it generally changes more often than the stones. You would place the essence bottle in the East. Your stones may not change at all for months or they may ask to be removed or shifted often. After you make changes on your grid, take your right hand and hover over the East until you feel the warmth of the energies in your hand and then spread it around the circle over each of the other three directions and bring it up through the center point if you have one or just conclude in the East.

This is a microcosm of your world so it will help soften the blow of the hard times or possibly prevent them and accentuate the positive energies.

In my home I maintain many grids, one for myself, of course, and for my six animals as well. There is also a grid for healing the oceans that I created in a large fishbowl that actually has pure water in it. Remember,

we are recreating the perfect ocean, and this one is quite elaborate with many stones, shells crystal carved dolphins etc.

I have a small planetary healing grid inside and a huge one outdoors with twenty-five lb. amethyst crystal points, a rose quartz sphere of the same weight or more in the center and many other large five or more lb. pieces of smokey quartz, citrine and Lemurian seed crystals. When I really feel like the planet, the country, the weather, or my own area are in crisis, I spend time there in prayer and meditation.

Tales of the Grid!

There are many reasons to create a grid but one should never use them to manipulate or control another. Mostly people just make them for themselves, their kids, partners, or animals.

On one occasion, an old friend came for a reading and was quite distraught because her daughter, who had been one of the most positive, smart young women, had somehow fallen in with a really bad crowd, left her job, school and home and was using hard drugs. For a situation like this, where life and death issues are on the table, a little positive direction is not only acceptable but a damn good idea.

Her Mom and I created a grid for her that would open the door for her highest good to occur. As long as you are asking for someone's highest good you keep yourself from controlling and manipulating. When the mother told her daughter what she was doing, she was overjoyed and truly grateful for the help and bit by bit went back to school and work and quit drugs. I have seen many lives totally change for the better with the use of grids.

For our dear animals, the grid can be an incredible tool for healing and even for knowing or confirming when there is a problem of some kind. One horrible night, my beautiful white cat Jade was hit by a car right in front of me and ran off to a place where I could not treat her directly.

First, I treated myself as I was a total wreck and, after several droppers full of Green Hope Farms Arbor Garden Essence, I was able to begin figuring out how to help my little girl. First thing, I went to her grid and began dowsing the stones to see what changes were necessary and to see if her flower essences needed a change, too. I added

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Girls to Women: Coming of Age Rituals

by Brenda Sutton

©iStockphoto.com/Anita Patterson)

Ask yourself, “When did I first feel like an adult?”

Once upon a time in the Jurassic feminism of the 1960s, all of the boys in my fifth-grade class were dismissed to play a guys-only kickball game. When the door closed behind them, my teacher passed out permission slips for a private event, and instructed us girls to take them home for our mothers’ signatures. In my childhood’s generation, the normal physical changes of young womanhood were taught by the school nurse in a clandestine meeting in the cafeteria. The boys on the A/V team set up the film projector, showed the nurse which button to push to start it, and then left the room. Only girls whose mothers accompanied them were allowed to see the mysterious film and receive the secret handshakes, special instructions and tools. My newly liberated working mom was unable to get the day off, and so I stood outside, ear pressed to the door, confused and frustrated. No one would tell me what was going on in that locked room. The same no-show scenario played out in the sixth grade. Fortunately, the school nurse took pity on me. “I’m not supposed to do this, but...here,” she said, handing me small box and a brochure, “take this home and read it.”

According to the powder pink and baby blue brochure, I was going to become a woman sometime soon. A year and a half later when the transition finally happened, I remember huddling in my bed after a fumbling hour in the bathroom thinking, “I’m a woman now. I’m a *woman* now. *I’m* a woman now...” but I didn’t feel any different than I had an hour before when I had been a child. Not much of a transition, and certainly an inadequate rite of passage.

Shakespeare handily identified the seven ages of a man’s life in a speech from *As You Like It*, but he didn’t write a similar speech on the ages of women. It’s not hard to imagine where the roads might part. Some of the categories would stay the same. Baby girls mewl and puke right along with our brothers. We, too, toddle off to school. Up until recently, the feminine passive role in love differed from that of active male suitors, but we share youthful passion. There’s one dividing love line, though. In the not far recent past, many a woman with no bride price or dowry transitioned from being the one who carded the wool, to the one who spun the wool—a spinster, or old maid who later became the aged single aunt, knitting away her solitary life.

As for the warrior’s way, there are examples like the Fa Mulan legends in China, and several *Soldier Maid* stories in Europe



and the Americas cuts off her hair, binds her breasts, and enlists in the military until she is inevitably betrayed by love. Scandinavian Valkeries, Celtic female war chieftains like Boudicea, and Etruscan Amazons—female warriors abound in many societies. However, although many women may serve valiantly in the military, it’s not the usual female path. Far more venture into marriage and motherhood. We do share Shakespeare’s description of middle age with the paunch and the shrunken shank. On to the final stages: the second childhood; and, because no one gets off the planet alive, death. It’s that middle ground, the part between school and paunch, which separates women’s rites of passage from those of men.

According to German ethnographer Arthur van Gennep, rites of passage have three transitional stages (geographical, social, and spiritual) in one’s life time: separation, transition, and reincorporation. Usually, we understand them as the stages from birth to death. But it is also the process between the two stages, or within each stage. In the first phase, the person withdraws from the group and begins moving from one place or status to another. In the second liminal phase, the person has left one place or state but not yet entered the next. In the third phase, they reenter society, having completed the rite.

How important is it for one’s community to acknowledge a young girl’s journey from child to adult?

The Apache Sunrise Ceremony is a good example of a female rite of passage that encompasses all three phases. The performance of this ritual was banned in the US government’s efforts to erase Native American culture. When the ceremony was decriminalized by the American Indian Religious Freedom Act in 1978, the ritual returned to resume its place as one of the most important events in an Apache female’s life. Called *na’ii’ees*, the word means “molding of a person.” The ritual imbues young women at the age of 13 with the spirit and

characteristics of White Painted Woman, the Apache culture's first woman—she who is called *Esdzanadehe* or Changing Woman.

The first woman survived the Great Flood in an abalone shell. She wandered the land while the waters receded. Stranded atop a mountain, she was impregnated by the sun and gave birth to a boy called the Killer of Enemies. Then she was impregnated by the Rain, and gave birth to the Son of Water. The world was made safe when White Painted Woman's sons killed the Owl Man Giant. Upon their triumphant return from their victory, White Painted Woman expressed a cry of exaltation and delight, which later is echoed by the godmother or sponsor during the Sunrise Ceremony. White Painted Woman was then guided by spirits to create a puberty rite for all daughters of her people. She instructed the women of the tribe in the ritual and the rites of womanhood. When she becomes old, White Painted Woman walks east toward the sun until she meets her younger self, merges with it, and becomes young again. She is born again and again, from generation to generation.

Na'ii'ees usually take place over a Friday to Monday in the spring and early summer. During the physically demanding ritual, the girl's skin is painted with a sacred mixture of pollen, clay and commel which must not be removed during the entire ceremony. She sits for long hours with her back perfectly straight. She prays towards the east at dawn and in the four cardinal directions representing the four stages of life. She dances, and dances, and dances—a simple two-step pattern, but eventually the body and mind fall into an exhausted trance state. One pause or misstep could mean an ill omen in her future. Her body is physically molded, as White Changing Woman was molded. It is a test of endurance during which she is given instruction in self-esteem, dignity, confidence, sexuality, and healing ability. It takes the combined labor and income of nearly four sets of extended families to hold this complicated ritual. A Sunrise Dance can cost anywhere from \$7,000 to \$13,000 to pay for the dancers, the medicine man who will sing 62 songs in the completion of the four-day ceremony, the food and labor, and ceremonial garb for the key people, not to mention the traveling costs to bring everyone together.

In many Latin countries, a young woman may still participate in *Quinceañera* or *Quince Años* (Fifteen Years) which involves the casting aside of a favorite doll, the move from flat shoes to high heels, and an elaborate ball with fifteen dancing couples. Although the celebration is now more secular and social than religious, it still includes a mass for the blessings of the Virgin Mother. The young woman dressed in formal white, her shoulders cloaked, is crowned by her mother or a friend.

Fifty to a hundred years ago, a Western woman may have experienced entrance into adult society through a "Coming Out" party, debutante's ball, or other gala event, followed by marriage and children. Roll into the modern age, and even those rites of

passage have been watered down to what is now known as "Prom Night."

But what of the young girl who never goes to the prom, who doesn't enjoy an evening of whirling couples and limo rides? How does a young girl learn pride in herself when the natural changes of her body are considered taboo, unclean, and disguised by language of double entendre and innuendo? What marks her journey to maturity?

I know too many invisible women who have been denied acceptance or recognition of important transitions by either family or community. They often desperately cobble together lonely, destructive, unsatisfying Pass/Fail rituals of anorexia, bulimia, self-mutilation, and depression. But I've also seen strength and self-mastery manifested in the lives of women who've enjoyed ritual recognition when they've chosen a direction to dance at liminal crossroads.

We know that the transition from child to adult has no firm dividing line. No one goes to sleep one night to wake up an adult in the morning, and some folks of advanced years manage to remain childish or childlike all the days of their lives. Most women don't tend to talk about their rites of passage unless it's part of a 12-Step Program, but conversations on the topic inevitably result in someone saying, "Women don't need rites of passage. Their bodies tell them when they transition from girl to woman, from bride to wife, from mother to crone." I don't agree—I don't agree at all. The epidemic of women affected by disorders connected directly to low self-esteem are muted cries for the wisdom of mentors, elders, teachers, parents, and friends. If unmuted, I believe that young girls would shout, "Show me, lead me, help me take these leaps!" If you had to choose between silent, solitary exploration of an unknown and frightening destination, or the company of wise, experienced guides, which would you prefer? Me? I'd take the advice a well-trained Sherpa every time.

Does your community or spiritual society recognize or ritualize a young woman's move from child to adult? If the answer to that question is no, why not?

Two women of my coven approached me when their daughters were around age 9 - 10 asking if we could conduct a ritual to mark this important move from child to young woman. We had some time, so we went into serious mull mode for a while, talking with other coven leaders and participating in different rites at pagan gatherings. Time passed rather swiftly, as it will, and the anxious mothers and I put our heads together to craft a personal ritual that we felt would be meaningful and celebratory.

The morning of the ritual, the parents awakened their daughters and treated them as if they were very small children. Mama picked out her baby's clothing, fixed her favorite foods, and directed every step. The daughters were instructed to spend the day going through their rooms removing every symbol of

childhood. Childish clothing was packed away, thrown away, or given away to charity. Toy boxes were cleaned out; stuffed animals were taken from beds. The daughters were allowed to keep a few sentimental treasures, but these were placed high on shelves where they could be seen. One very special item was set aside for use in ritual later that night.

After traveling to the ritual site, the Mothers robed themselves in black or green, and the Daughters in white. Both Mothers and Daughters were cloistered in a darkened room lit by a single candle. The women of the coven, acting as Aunts, entered the torch-lit circle space and stood around the center bale fire. The altar, draped in red, was festooned in unblossomed spring flower buds, unsprung pussy willows and cat tails.

A special woman chosen by the Daughter to stand as her Aunt entered the cloister room in silence. The Aunt tied a slipknot in both ends of a long skein of red ribbon, pulling a loop of ribbon through that was large enough to go around the waist of the Mother on one end and around the Daughter on the other. The excess ribbon was gathered up and placed in the Mother's left hand. The Daughter was given her favorite toy to hold in her arms. Her Aunt tied a red lace or gauze scarf loosely over the Daughter's eyes, obscuring her vision but not so much that she could not see to walk. No words were spoken, but only smiles exchanged. The Aunt offered Mother and Daughter a kiss, and then lead them out to the circle area.

As they approached, the only sounds were the usual forest songs, a deep, low drum played like a heartbeat, and the Aunts chanting. The women of the circle joined hands, spiraling widdershins (anti-clockwise). The two tallest women stopped near the circle entrance and joined hands, forming the arch of a human tunnel. The rest of the women followed under the arch of arms to form their own arching pairs. They created a spiraling tunnel around the bale fire, each pair's arch getting lower and closer to the ground, until it ended in the eastern quadrant of the circle. I entered the tunnel and the Mothers followed me, one at a time. The red cord around her waist played out until she eventually pulled her Daughter into the tunnel. As each Daughter entered the tunnel, passing under the arching arms, the chanting changed from humming to the words. "Push! Push! Push! Push!"

When the Mother exited the tunnel in the east, women washed her face with a wet cloth and dried it with a towel. The Mother stood astride with her back to the end of the tunnel, her robes essentially sealing the entrance. I knelt, candle in hand—as the priestess of Hecate, goddess of midwives, once stood between the legs of laboring women—to guide the spirit of the new life into the world. I raised the Mother's robe just high enough to allow a little light into the tunnel and beckoned.

Her Aunt took up the red cord and continued to pull the Daughter through the tunnel, under her Mother's legs, out into the firelight and into welcoming arms. The Aunt then removed the gauzy

blindfold. When both Daughters were through the tunnel, the pair of women who formed the end arch re-entered the tunnel and unwound it deosil (clockwise).

Once all had returned to stand in the circle, my Handmaiden and I washed and dried the Daughter's face, and wrapped a blanket around her shoulders. The Mother fed her child from a cup of milk and honey. If you're not expecting milk to taste so sweet, the honey goes straight to the back of the throat, and much coughing ensued. It was much like burping the baby.

From this point forward, we no longer referred to the Daughter as *Child* but only as *Sister*. This was the beginning point of community recognition of her new accepted status. We called upon the Maiden in Her morning light of the East and for Her blessings of intelligence, imagination, and inspiration for our new sisters. We sought the Warrior in the noonday sun of the South for her gifts of energy, will, and passion. We summoned the Mother in the evening sunset of the West requesting love, creativity, and empathy. And we beseeched the Crone in the midnight dark of the North for health, strength, and prosperity.

"Oh, Mighty Diana, Maiden Huntress, Silver Crescent, Forest Guardian, Wild Woman! We honor you in your woodland grove, here separated and shielded from the eyes of Man. Let your wisdom, Your love and Your power fill these sisters as they enter into womanhood. Teach them the magick of the Moon, the mysterious cycles of their Tides, and the glory of their physical Temple. Fill them with joy and beauty, awe and respect for their transformation. Run with them as they hunt their dreams. Great Goddess, share your strength, wisdom, and freedom."

Then the Mother addressed her daughter with the words of the poet, Judith Wright:

Mothers to Daughters

*You who were darkness warmed my flesh
Where out of darkness rose the seed.
Then all a world I made in me;
All the world you hear and see
Hung upon my dreaming blood.*

*There moved the multitudinous stars,
And colored birds and fishes moved.
There swam the sliding continents.
All time lay rolled in me, and sense,
And love that knew not its beloved.*

*O node and focus of the world;
I hold you deep within that well
You shall escape and not escape—
That mirrors still your sleeping shape;
That nurtures still your crescent cell.*

I wither and you break from me;

*Yet though you dance in living light,
I am the earth, I am the root,
I am the stem that fed the fruit,
The link that joins you to the night.*

The Mother gifted her Daughter with a beautiful ruby ring in a golden band on her right hand, and asked, “Do you have any gift for me?” The only thing each Daughter held was that one special toy, which they relinquished. There was a little fear expressed that it might be cast into the fire, but, with stern assurance, the Mother then commanded her Daughter to kneel in the East. The Aunt stood behind the Daughter and placed her hands on the young women’s shoulders. Each Mother slowly backed away from her Daughter, moving deosil, first South and then West. With the Daughter in the East and the Mother in the West, the red umbilical cord that connected them was pulled directly over the bale fire in the center of the circle, its flames severing the link. The Aunt gathered up the remnant of the cords, making sure that the burned ends were extinguished. She took the cords from the waists of the new Sister, removed the swaddling blanket, and led her charge to the altar and away from her Mother, now left holding only the discarded toy.

In places of honor and with great merriment, the Aunt plaited the Sister’s hair, holding it in place with polished combs. She was gifted with a beautiful handkerchief to help with Life’s tears of joy and sorrow, and with a silver mirror and comb—ancient feminine symbols of fertility and beauty. Her cheeks and lips were rouged, her arms were anointed with perfumed oil, and the women of the coven embraced her with blessings. Then came a feast that the men of the coven joined for the presentation of many more personal gifts to honor this new path on the road to adulthood.

It’s been a couple of years since that ceremony. Both of the girls who participated that night have blossomed into beautiful, respectful young women. They’ve assumed roles of responsibility and are developing mature personalities. I spent some time talking with one of them recently about her memories of that night. She remembered the change to her room, and her confidence in placing the symbols of childhood behind her. She recalled being nervous and a little frightened at the weirdness of entering that dark, physical tunnel. She held an image of her mother’s face with smiles and tears. She loved having her favorite Aunt plait her hair and the gifting that followed.

I asked her if she felt any different before and after the ceremony, and she confessed that the women of the coven treat her with respect, but that most of the men still see her as a child. That gave me pause, for I believe part of the reason is because the men don’t participate in this important ceremony until the partying begins. I wondered what could be added to this transition ceremony to make it even more meaningful to the girls and our community. The answer came when I had the opportunity to interview a young woman named Allie Linowes about her *Bat Mitzvah* ceremony, the Coming of Age for young Jewish

women.

“Bat Mitzvah” means “one to whom the commandments apply,” or literally, “daughter of the commandment”. The *Bat Mitzvah* is scheduled on or near the girl’s 13th birthday. Although young men have been participating in a similar *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony for ages, the first *Bat Mitzvah* ceremony didn’t happen until 1922. Now the tradition for young women has been embraced by most non-Orthodox Jewish traditions, although Orthodox, Haredi, and Sephardic traditions do not allow women to read *Torah* or lead ceremony.

Most Jewish children start preparing for their rite of passage about a year in advance, but Allie was actually looking forward to this event much earlier. She decided to give herself a project of civic responsibility. An artist herself, Allie began three years in advance of her *Bat Mitzvah* contacting other artists, asking for donations of art to a silent auction. The proceeds were dedicated to help an Israeli orphan shelter with food, school supplies, and clothing. She anticipated raising around \$1000. Ultimately, though, her efforts yielded much more. The donations of over 50 artists brought in a whopping \$5,500! The surplus money went to sponsor a *Bat Mitzvah* party for the girls of the shelter, something they never dreamed of enjoying.

Additionally, the *Bat Mitzvah* girl performs what’s come to be known as the *13 X 6*—thirteen *mitzvahs* (acts of human kindness) from six categories accomplished in six weeks. The practice instilled in Allie a desire to continue to do community service, a real positive experience of volunteerism.

A portion of the *Torah* highlights every week of the Jewish calendar year. The *Bat Mitzvah* candidate memorizes the section that corresponds to her birthday, and she is responsible for reading it aloud in synagogue. So, six months out from Allie’s *Bat Mitzvah*, she began memorizing her *Torah* portion. She practiced with older cousins, studied once a week with a *Torah* tutor, and used her family every night as an audience to rehearse. The section she had to memorize was from *Leviticus*, and dealt with sacrifices and the rules governing the priests conducting sacrifices—not a particularly thrilling section, but Allie set herself to the daunting task.

You see, *Torah* is not so much spoken as it is sung or chanted. The texts have tonal lead sheets to let the singer know the pitches, but it still requires a lot of study to get the portions correct. In addition, the person receiving *Bat Mitzvah* gives a speech that relates the *Torah* portion to life, and allows proper thanks to the family and congregation. Allie was worried that she would choke up during the speech. Considering that lists of the ten most frightening activities show public speaking is rated more fearful than death, this is a fairly intimidating experience. Allie attends a Jewish school where, though not mandatory, reciting one’s *Torah* portion before the entire 6th, 7th and 8th grade classes is encouraged. This preview of the *Torah* reading,

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MYTHIC LIVING

by Kris Waldherr

Inspiration. The word itself is expansive. It brings to mind the invigorating intake of air into lungs, filling us with energy. It suggests a world charmed with possibilities, unfolding in a sudden flash of light. Haven't we all heard someone say, "I had no idea what to do next. Then, out of the blue, I had an inspiration. It was like magic."

Where did that inspiration come from?
What made it take form?

The word *inspiration* itself suggests the mode of its creation. Its first syllable, *in*, means to create inclusion, to set limits to that which is limitless. It forces something shapeless to take shape—similar to what happens when water is contained within a cup, or air inside a balloon. Its second syllable, *spir*, is taken from the word *spiritus*, the Latin word for breath—meaning to breathe life into something in order to animate it, to fill it with spirit.

Inspiration. To take spirit into ourselves. Like the air surrounding us, we cannot see inspiration. But it is there nonetheless. And it animates us when we least expect it.

When most people think of inspiration, they usually connect it to the mysterious activities of artists and poets. Though inspiration is primarily associated with creative endeavors, it is much more than that. It opens us to possibilities beyond what our rational mind can perceive. In some cases, it takes the form of intuition, an internal knowledge that often keeps us safe and protected. But most of all, inspiration allows us to practice an invaluable skill I call "flexible thinking."

Flexible thinking is the ability to think outside the box, so we may find a solution to a dilemma when there appears to be none. It is nonlinear in form, arriving in flashes of

images and ideas instead of neatly packaged within an obvious answer that can be deduced empirically. Flexible thinking allows us to be receptive to possibilities, to listen before we act. It encourages us to bend like a willow tree in the wind instead of shattering into pieces when confronted by adversity.

If we use the standard wisdom that the feminine represents the receptive principle (or yin) and the masculine is active (or yang), then flexible thinking is feminine in nature—divinely feminine, if you will. The same equation can be written of inspiration itself.

As representatives of the Divine Feminine, goddesses have been honored through the ages for their capacity to encourage inspiration. In ancient Greece, the Muses were praised for their ability to breathe life into scholarly and artistic works. The Celtic goddess Brigit was invoked for the spark

of creativity. Her sacred holiday of Imbolg, celebrated every February first, included rituals designed to increase creativity. The Oracle of Erda, the Norse goddess of the earth, invited mortals to find inspiration within nature's blueprint; divine will could be discerned by watching the patterns of waves or the movement of clouds across the sky.

These are only three examples in which goddesses provide us with the inspiration we need to transform our lives. Within the *Goddess Inspiration Oracle* you will find an additional seventy-seven—a total of eighty deities who represent essential aspects of the Divine Feminine.

About the Divine Feminine and Goddesses

The *Goddess Inspiration Oracle* presents the wisdom of the Divine Feminine in a manner meant to spark



inspiration in you. But what exactly *is* the Divine Feminine, which some also call the Sacred Feminine?

In recent years, the Divine Feminine has gained much attention due to the blockbuster success of *The Da Vinci Code*. Because of this phenomenon, some might consider the Divine Feminine tangential only to Mary Magdalene and a suppressed history of women in Christianity. But the Divine Feminine encompasses more than Mary Magdalene, as overlooked as she has been. It expands to embrace the innate wisdom and strength so many women possess in abundance, the very spirit which animates us.

As I have noted in previous books, one way in which the Divine Feminine has been honored over the ages was in the form of goddesses—women of sacred and eternal power. As such, these divine women represented the concerns of the people who worshiped them. The goddesses were invoked to provide a generous harvest, a safe birth, a happy afterlife, and much more. In other words, they held dominion over all aspects of life and death.

Some believe that many of these goddesses originated from a supreme triple goddess. Similar in structure to the Christian trinity of father, son, and holy spirit, but older in origin, the triple goddess traditionally reflected the three stages of a woman's life: maiden, mother, and crone. Each of these goddesses corresponded to the phases of the moon, with the waxing moon representing the maiden, the full moon the mother or fertile woman, and finally, the waning dark moon the crone or post-menstrual woman.

As humans became more sophisticated in their spiritual and emotional needs, it is thought that the triple goddess became splintered into innumerable deities. Individually, these goddesses serve to represent different aspects of life. Combined, they comprise the complex and all-encompassing force of the Divine Feminine.

Just as goddesses have been present throughout history, I firmly believe that inspiration is always present in the world. As an artist and author, I experience this all the time—even the genesis for this deck came in a sudden flash of inspiration when I least expected it! However, sometimes inspiration may not be as accessible as we wish. During these fallow periods, tools such as the *Goddess Inspiration Oracle* can help us become

receptive to the knowledge we most need at that moment.

About Oracles

Oracles bear the double duty of being both the message as well as the vehicle in which to communicate this message.

In the ancient world, the term *oracle* referred to the sacred place where prophecy was received as well as the person channeling it. One famous example is the Oracle of Delphi, located on Mount Parnassus in the heart of the Greek empire. It was sacred to the deities Apollo and Gaia and served by numerous priestesses known as the Pythia. Pilgrims would travel far distances to consult the Oracle of Delphi, granting great import to the communications offered there. An article in *National Geographic* magazine in 2001 suggested that the Pythia's messages were encouraged by ethylene—a gas with narcotic properties—escaping from the earth itself. Presumably it enabled the priestesses to bypass their conscious minds in order to receive the messages needed from the other side.



Today, many consider an oracle the message itself; to quote media critic Marshall McLuhan, the medium is now the message. The knowledge granted by the oracle offers necessary information from a new source, hopefully bypassing human fallibility. The oracle may be predictive in nature, or it may simply provide us with an objective mirror in which to observe a

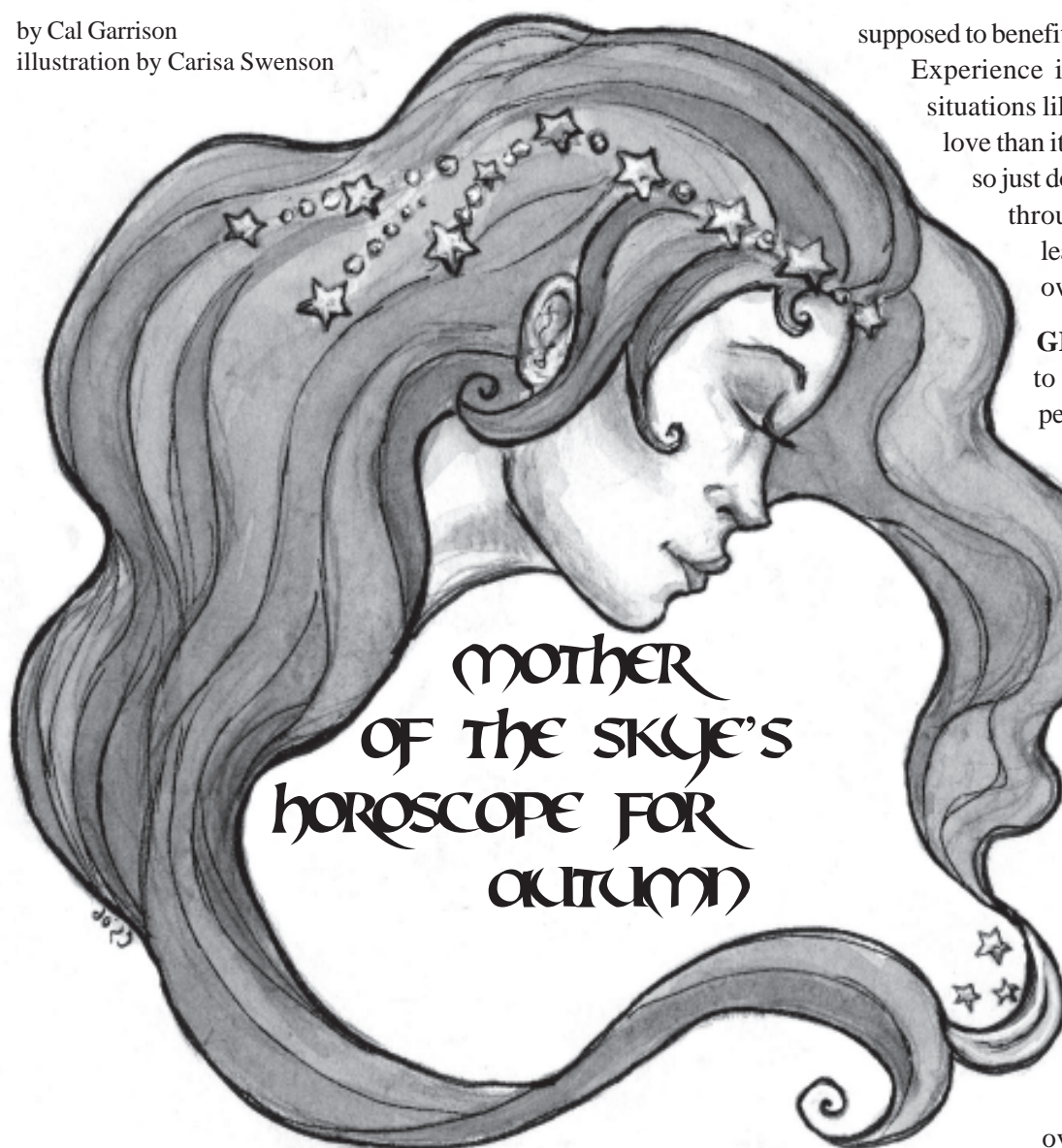
situation.

Whichever definition you prefer, the function of an oracle remains the same: oracles offer information. How we choose to interpret this information and what we decide to do with it is up to us. They often provide us with an experience of synchronicity, a term created by the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung to describe a series of seemingly random events that connect within us to gain a deeper meaning.

In the case of an oracle, our personal experiences synchronistically connect with it, thus creating a message unique to our situation. By doing so, the oracle helps us release information we already possess deep within our psyche. It frees us to see with new eyes.

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by Cal Garrison
illustration by Carisa Swenson



MOTHER OF THE SKYE'S HOROSCOPE FOR AUTUMN

ARIES: This situation is getting to you. You wish you could have it both ways but you have to make a choice. It might help for you to take a break from someone or something, if only to regain your clarity. If you're trying to be OK with things because you're afraid of what will happen if you say you're not, how can you expect to be anything but dissatisfied? You may not want to upset people but you might be more surprised than they are to find out that a good blowup may be what's needed to balance this.

TAURUS: If persistence pays off, you'll be successful. It's hard to tell if you'd be wiser to keep on pushing or start all over again. What you want for others right now, they have to want for themselves. All the positive thinking in the world won't do you much good if the person it's

supposed to benefit sees things differently. Experience is the only teacher in situations like this. It's more about love than it is about your thoughts so just do your best to love them through this and let them learn their lessons in their own way.

GEMINI: It's real hard to have to hang out with people you're done with, but sometimes we don't have a choice. You're handling this better than anyone else would in your situation. Just know that it won't be this way forever and try to think about what's next instead of what you seem to be stuck with right now. It might be good to unload some of your assets. Something about the idea of overextending yourself appeals to you, but you've

gone overboard. Dump whatever you can't use and simplify your life.

CANCER: You'd be happier about this if it was your choice. Now that you allowed it to happen you have to go along with the program. It's hard to say how things will turn out but with this many mistakes to rectify you can bet there are some big dues getting paid. What you couldn't wake up to before is more than clear to you now. Sifting through the sequence of events that led you to this place, you need to forgive others and yourself. It wasn't all your fault. You didn't fail. It was your principles that failed you here.

LEO: If you think you can do this, go for it, but don't be

surprised if it turns out to be bigger than you are. A lot of what happens now depends on timing. If this can wait, hold off on it. In the meantime you've got plenty to keep you busy so distract yourself with whatever makes you happy. Confusion in close relationships shouldn't make you paranoid. If people are freaking out on you, tell them to grow up. Between a major identity crisis and an overbooked life they can't expect too much from you now.

VIRGO: No matter how much you want to do this you need to hold back. What feels like the right thing to do will only create more trouble. As hard as it is to accept the idea that you can't be totally truthful, sometimes it's necessary to keep it to yourself. A little foresight will show you that whatever you say will be held against you. Even though we like to think that everyone is self aware, most of us are not. In this situation you'd be wise to cultivate more familiarity with other people's issues than you have with your own.

LIBRA: Nobody told you it would go this way. What you can't understand is why. Following the rules for perfect order made so much sense up till now. Look at what's changed and ask yourself who you are now. Identifying too much with the past and who you always thought you were won't work anymore. You have a future and it's time to decide who you want to be. One thing's for sure. You can't rebuild your life with the values you used 10 years ago. There are a million ways to do life. Make yours your own.

SCORPIO: How far do you think you can take this? Others aren't quite as comfortable with it as you are. Sometimes getting what you want is easier with the indirect approach. And, you always have to keep in mind that it could be the last thing you need. What makes you think getting more deeply involved with outer things or someone else is the answer to anything? If your mind's on fire trying to figure out how to get this to happen, give it a rest. You may be forcing your will on something that won't do you much good.

SAGITTARIUS: Walking your talk is hard sometimes. We fall off the path constantly. If you could forgive yourself for being human you'd see that this most recent slip was therapeutic. And at least it showed you that you still have work to do. Now that you're clearer about your issues, you'll see them come up in everything you do.

Your outer life may become disturbed in ways that make you think it's all worthless, but it's only because you're letting go of so much. Don't freak out. Something new will replace it.

CAPRICORN: Waiting to see how things will play out, you're wondering if you can stand not knowing what it will mean for you. As hard as it is to be in the middle of this, you can only trust that the uncertainty is part of the lesson. Others are as confused as you are but they're doing the best they can. More than anything, that's what you all need to remember. Even though you disagree on how to get things to turn out for the best, you each have to trust that the other person is doing whatever they can to make that happen.

AQUARIUS: Worrying too much about what others will think if you decide to do what you want to do isn't helping you move forward. Who cares really? Those who do, won't have a problem with it. None of us can afford to hold ourselves back from anything right now. The world isn't the way it used to be and there's no point pretending you can wait any longer. Arrange your time so that you can spend more energy getting this new stuff moving and less energy on the things that you've built your life around up until now.

PISCES: This situation is really so simple it's a little strange that you need to complicate it. You need your freedom right now. Whoever you feel so responsible for needs theirs too. If you can come to an agreement, both of you can experience this transition as a passage instead of a war. You're not on Jerry Springer so don't waste your energy doing things you will later regret. In the end, if you can allow others the same kind of freedom you expect them to give you, both of you will find out a little more about true love.

Cal Garrison now lives in the magical community of Sedona, AZ. In her everyday life she works as an astrologer tarot card reader, does private consulting and writes on astrology, meditation and magic. She still may be reached at runewitch@hotmail.com



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Aphrodite, full of grace long before the birth of Mary, sometimes I fear I've lost you in the slim pickings of the sex-goddess incarnations who slightly reflect your radiance so wayward from the ironic lucidity I see in perfect pictures.

Venus Verticordia grieves: our mother Aphrodite, a wide-ranging aphrodisiac, an erotic pharmacopoeia, is stripped down to one simple, insufficiently effective drug. Aphrodisiac: mistaken for merely a substance to ingest.

Aphrodite, you stimulate me in intricately erotic ways. You arouse the pleasure I feel in my own beauty. Erotic: you mothered the meaning of this word, whose profundity is minimized by the synonym sexy—a useful colloquialism, shorthand for aphrodisiac.

Monster, mother, huge in the ability to praise yourself, I can look at you any time I see myself.

Aphrodite, save me from the self-contempt elicited by approximating the ideal beauty. She is a fluffcake and a stalker who has betrayed monster/beauty, the pleasurable corporeality that is your domain.

Aphrodite, help me build the body of love.²

Next, I light the traditional frankincense granules and offer thanks for the past graces I have received, and I pray for future blessings from several different manifestations of Aphrodite, distinguished by her epithets: Aphrodite *Epitragidia* (buck goat), *Cyprian* (from Cyprus), *Philomeides* (laughter-loving) and *Eleemon* (merciful).

After the formalities, I sit and meditate before the altar, listening for any communications from Deity. Sometimes I murmur my troubles and wishes to her at this time. To conclude, I pour a final libation to Hestia, then end the rite and dismantle my altar.

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For more about Joanna Frueh, please see her website at <http://www.joannafrueh.com/enter.html>

[/www.joannafrueh.com/enter.html](http://www.joannafrueh.com/enter.html)

Caroline Tully is interested in the pre-Christian religions of the ancient Mediterranean, the demonization of the Pagan gods after the rise of Christianity, and their re-appearance in modern mystery religions such as Witchcraft, Neo-Paganism and Ceremonial Magick. A practitioner of Witchcraft for over twenty years and a fervid article-writer, Caroline has been published in more than twenty international Pagan publications including *The Cauldron*, *The Wiccan Rede* and *newWitch*, and for six years was a feature writer and reviewer for Australia's *Witchcraft* magazine. Caroline has also contributed a chapter on the southern hemisphere approach to the *Witches' Sabbats for Practicing the Witch's Craft* by Douglas Ezzy (Allen and Unwin 2003); another on the role of the Horned God in contemporary Witchcraft to *Pop! Goes the Witch* by Fiona Home (Disinformation 2004); and described her visionary experiences during childbirth for *Celebrating the Pagan Soul* by Laura Wildman (Citadel Press 2005). Her in-depth article on the legacy of Roman Witchcraft will appear in *Everything You Know About Religion is Wrong*, edited by Russ Kick and coming out in July 2007 from Disinformation, USA. Please visit her blog: <http://necropolisnow.blogspot.com/>



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6 garlic cloves, pressed

1 medium red bell pepper, roasted

1 medium poblano pepper, roasted

1/4 cup finely chopped green onions

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

2 teaspoons fresh lime juice

3 ripe peeled avocado, seeded and coarsely mashed

Salt and white pepper to taste

Roast peppers, chop onions and cilantro, press garlic, mash avocados, and squeeze limes. Add all ingredients with salt and pepper, mixing well. This is delicious with salted chips and margaritas.

In spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart. I simply can't build up my hopes on a foundation consisting of confusion, misery and death.

~Anne Frank

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case in Western Washington) you could look at a candle and remember her light. She is the spark of life within everything, beginning and end. You can also close your eyes and stare into your own infinite darkness. One of her holy symbols is the dandelion, which I call the Nova Blossom. It looks like a miniature sun there in the grass. It is very hardy, and it grows everywhere. It is a help to humans and one of the first greens of spring. Stones that are sacred to her are star sapphires, black opal, meteorites. Kyanite, when it is the color of a summer sky, is sacred to her since it is aluminum silicate. Aluminum is one of the metals that allows us to fly, to get closer to her. Metals that are sacred to her are aluminum, platinum and titanium. Colors are ultraviolet, blue, white, yellow, orange, red, infrared. Those are the colors of the stellar spectrum. Sacred animals are owls, bats, blue or black herons, white or black swans, cats. This list is incomplete; it is only a starting point. Feel free to explore on your own. Each path is unique, no planet orbits the same.

Here is what I have found in my own meditations: The lesson of the Star Goddess is that we can all be that star to others. None of us knows the All in its entirety, none of us could, but at the same time we each have some unique thing that can inspire others, give them ideas, give them hope and light to see by. And as we enrich others, so can we be enriched by them. This is the Charge of the Star Goddess, to be a tiny point of light that makes all the difference. Even if you aren't destined to be a great, radiant, all-giving Sun, you can still be a guide, a beacon, an inspiration. And when you go out to that tiny point of light, so far away, you will find it to be another Sun if you just get close enough! Each has varying color and shade and size and luminosity, is with or without companion planets or stars, yet is unique and beautiful in its own right. So are we all!

When we looked up to the sky from inside a newly-built Stonehenge, she was there. When half-frozen astronomers seek to worship her by their careful note-making, she is there. When hikers tell stories by a campfire and look up to her constellations, she is there. When cramped astronauts look out their small view-ports and glory in her brilliant light unfiltered by atmosphere, she calls to them and is there. And when we finally find the means to reach out into the universe and explore the rest of our galaxy, she will still be there. For she is Mother of us all. She is the beginning and the end. She is the Primordial One, our Star Goddess.

Rachel Plassman is an artist, pilot, science fiction and poetry writer, and seeker. She wishes to thank her best friend for all the help she has given. For more information about the Starmother, feel free to visit



www.starmother.bravehost.com

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lot of stones to amp up her life force, like ruby, garnet and smokey quartz to keep her grounded. I also placed the appropriate homeopathic like Arnica and Hypericum right on her grid as well. As I was doing all this in total panic, I began to feel somewhat better as I added each new stone or substance. At that point, I went back outside to where Jade was hiding way underneath a shed. I could see her crumpled form huddling in the cold dark night. I just had to save my Jadie Jade. I alternated sending prayers through her grid and singing to her outside all night long so that she wouldn't feel alone. When the morning came, my partner Tara and friend Silva dug her out from under the shed. It took us nearly three hours to do this and we didn't even know for sure what we would find when we got her but we had to try. I had a cat carrier and blankets ready to move her as soon as we could get her out. Tara finally grabbed her and passed her to Silva and she to me and we were off to the Vet's office. They saw her but never dreamed that we could save her foot, but by the next day we not only saved her life but her foot as well, and with much work, love and persistence, she totally recovered.

You don't always have to have a crisis of that magnitude for a grid for your animal friends to be useful. Sometimes the animal can be very stoic and unwilling to admit they are having a hard time so regular grid checks for these is a great idea. Perhaps the pendulum over the stone in the South is swinging backwards or counterclockwise, then you might guess that your critter is not feeling enough love in which case you can add more or stronger love stones or a clear quartz to amplify what you are sending.

So many stories to tell! When my youngest cat was a small and sickly kitten, I discovered that I had been making

a serious mistake regarding the location of his grid. In fact, I had been using this one precarious table for the grids of all the kittens that I had had for the last seven years and, sad to say, none of them had done very well. You see, you have to really be most thoughtful about all the metaphors that you use when you are creating Fifth Dimensional healing temples. A “shaky foundation” is a really bad metaphor. Needless to say, that table was thrown out the next day and no other kittens would be troubled with it again.

I am fortunate to live with almost more stones and crystals than the Smithsonian as I collect them, use them for healing, and sell them, so my palate is huge when I need to put a grid together. I also specialize and favor really high energy stones as I feel like they can do the most good now i.e. apophyllite, Lemurian seed crystals, lithium quartz, kunzite, celestial quartz, labradorite, spirit quartz and so many more. I also have and use all of the old standbys like clear, smokey, citrine, rose quartz, and amethyst. Moonstone, carnelian, black tourmaline, rainbow fluorite, green calcite or lapis are all good choices as well.

Whether you have five stones or 500, the process is the same. Take a chance on an amazing discovery and see how it feels for a month. I believe that you will feel your life improve in so many ways and it will give you yet another way to help and heal those you love.

Blessings, Flash Silvermoon

Flash Silvermoon is a nationally known psychic, astrologer, musician, teacher and author. She is an eclectic Dianic Priestess as well as being a vibrational healer. Flash has worked on many cases that have challenged the authorities and has a large clientele that includes the famous and nearly-famous. Serving the community for 31 years as a psychic astrologer and healer.

She specializes in the use of stones and crystals, working with them through layout on the body, grids, elixirs and her own unique combinations called "Power Tools." Flash also uses Flower Essences in her practice, which includes animals as well as humans.

Flash has been a leader in her field since the early 70's and has recently turned her efforts towards multi-cultural women's gatherings.

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thought Allie, would be far more scary than reading before the synagogue.

As mentioned before, Allie is an artist, and she chose to be an active participant in her *Bat Mitzvah*. As part of her involvement

in the upcoming ceremony, she created a painting that was later scanned and used as a personalized *Bat Mitzvah* invitation. It turned out that the Friday night of Allie's *Bat Mitzvah* was also the retirement for Rabbi Kranz. Now, Rabbi Kranz had performed his first *Bat Mitzvah* for Allie's mother, so it was appropriate that the last service he officiated would be Allie's *Bat Mitzvah*. A hurricane was battering the coast on that day, April 8th, and appointments for hair and nails were missed with folks huddled in the basement of the house. After the “all clear,” the family made their way to the synagogue thinking that the turn-out would be small. Then the people started coming...and coming...and coming until the place was packed.

All of the hard work paid off. Allie read her portion perfectly. By this time, her family knew her portion almost as well as she did, so they would have been able to tell if she'd missed anything. She felt in control of the service, but it all seemed to be going by so quickly. Then to the portion of the service called the *haftarah*, which usually has a thematic link to the Torah reading that precedes it. The *haftarah* is sung in the synagogue with cantillation (or trop), and its related blessings are given before and after it. In her excitement, Allie started racing through, and changed the tune...a bit. Not much. Not so much that many would notice. And when at last it was over—she wanted to do it all again.

Saturday, the day after the big night, is the time for celebration and being with family. Allie felt tired but energized, and proud of herself and all that she'd been able to accomplish. “It definitely changed me,” she said. “I felt more grown up, more confident.” Later, while attending another person's *Bar Mitzvah* she felt that the congregation wasn't participating, not singing along or with enough enthusiasm. She remembered what it had been like to stand where that boy/soon-to-be-a-man was standing. “Why aren't people singing?” she thought. “This isn't right.” So she started singing a little louder, a little stronger, “helping that kid out.” A *mitzvah*, one of many that will make up a considered life.

I asked both my Wiccan and Jewish maidens if a Rite of Passage was something that they would wish for their future daughters, and the answers came without hesitation. “Yes! Definitely!” Anticipating the next opportunity for my coven to celebrate a young person's transition from child to adult, female or male, I'll take the lessons learned from my discussions with young Allie Linowes to heart. The ritual will include more active participation on the part of the child-to-be-adult. There should be trial, and test, and a sense of accomplishment from the lessons one receives, not just celebration. After all, from what better source does one achieve wisdom?

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Brenda Sutton, singer/songwriter with the band Three Weird Sisters, is also the High Priestess of the Oak Spring Covenstead in Decatur, Georgia, the Operations Manager for Mythic Imagination Institute, and the Publisher of Mythic Passages. She is a writer and poet, the mother of five and the grandmother of two.

...continued from page 38

About the Goddess Inspiration Oracle

From time immemorial, oracles have been used to gain inspiration from the goddess. It is my fervent hope that the *Goddess Inspiration Oracle* continues in this tradition.

To create the *Goddess Inspiration Oracle*, I took inspiration from the more than one hundred goddesses I have described in art and words during much of my professional life. From these, I chose eighty goddesses who represented a wide variety of women's concerns. As I worked, inspiring messages organically emerged from their stories and my paintings. These messages offer creative solutions, comforting reassurances, and, most importantly, a new point of view to consider. They are intended to act as a catalyst for change.

Though I had previously created a deck devoted to the Divine Feminine—*The Goddess Tarot*—the *Goddess Inspiration Oracle* is intended to offer this wisdom to all women, not just to those who work with tarot. It presents a portrait of the Divine Feminine that expands beyond the wonderfully rich archetypes of the tarot.

I believe that we are surrounded by divine inspiration, that it often appears in mundane forms in our everyday life to tell us what we need to hear. People of ancient times also believed this. The Oracle of Erda, which I described earlier, reminds us that the natural world can provide us with sacred messages from the goddess.

Another beautiful example of goddess inspiration is described in Homer's *Odyssey*. Throughout Odysseus's long journey home from the Trojan War to his wife, Penelope, the goddess Athena mysteriously appears incognito to help the warrior when he is most in need. Sometimes the goddess disguises herself as his trusted friend Mentor; other times she takes on

the form of a stranger who happens to be at the right place at the right time. As such, the goddess grants Odysseus and his allies the exact information they need to know at that moment, without disclosing her divine stature.

These types of fortuitous interactions happen more often than we realize. We receive the divine inspiration we need to transform our lives but simply don't recognize it in its disguised form. In a novel or film, such convenient coincidences might be belittled as examples of *deus ex machina*, god—or goddess—in the machine; and they are, in the best possible sense of the expression.

The *Goddess Inspiration Oracle* was created to help you become more receptive to these experiences, and, by becoming more receptive, to encourage them. It is intended as an instrument for inviting the inspiration of the Divine Feminine into our lives when we most need it.

We are meant to be filled with joyful inspiration, to spill over with exuberant spirit. May the *Goddess Inspiration Oracle* animate your life with inspiration, providing you with an intimate experience of the Divine Feminine.

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Kris Waldherr is an author, illustrator and designer. Her newest publication is The Goddess Inspiration Oracle, which has just been published by Llewellyn Worldwide. The Goddess Inspiration Oracle features eighty goddesses from around the globe. For a free online reading and more, visit www.goddessinspiration.net.

Waldherr's other publications include The Goddess Tarot, The Lover's Path Tarot, The Book of Goddesses and The Lover's Path: An Illustrated Novel. The Book of Goddesses has been reissued in an expanded tenth anniversary edition by Abrams Books. She recently illustrated Goddess Alive! by Michelle Skye and Shamanic Mysteries of Egypt by Nicki Skully and Linda Star Wolf. Upcoming works include a book about the shadow side of female empowerment. Learn more about Kris Waldherr's art and publications at www.artandwords.com and www.kriswaldherr.com.



HEALING HERBS



GODDESS

by Janet Meadows

R D S E A R C H

ABEONA
ACHELOIS
ARTEMIS
AUCHIMALGEN
BACHUE
BLANCHEFLOR
BLODEWEDD
BYULSOON
CHIMALMAN
DEMETER

DEVI
ERIGONE
HEBE
HESTIA
HINA
KORE
KUPALA
MARY
MASTORAVA
MAYA

MENOS
NANDADEVI
PARVATI
SARASVATI
SHAKTI
SHINMU
SOPHIA
VESTA

R	Q	M	E	P	V	M	W	A	N	E	N	S	A	J
X	O	R	A	E	R	O	D	S	A	B	E	I	B	U
N	O	L	S	S	E	W	A	Z	N	E	G	M	E	H
K	O	T	F	U	T	R	D	R	D	H	L	E	O	G
E	A	O	H	E	A	O	E	M	A	Y	A	T	N	S
M	R	C	S	S	H	T	R	D	D	H	M	R	A	H
S	A	I	V	L	E	C	D	A	E	W	I	A	K	A
B	O	A	G	M	U	E	N	S	V	T	H	G	V	K
Y	T	N	E	O	W	Y	T	A	I	A	C	I	I	T
I	H	D	E	E	N	I	B	V	L	Z	U	A	N	I
I	V	E	D	M	A	E	I	H	M	B	A	L	G	A
S	I	O	L	E	H	C	A	P	A	R	V	A	T	I
T	L	A	I	H	P	O	S	B	R	A	I	P	Y	T
B	S	H	I	N	M	U	V	P	Y	D	J	U	K	P
C	H	I	M	A	L	M	A	N	Z	G	T	K	Y	D

The Beltane Review

Pagan ♦ Spiritual ♦ Feminist

Books ♦ Divination Tools ♦ Music ♦ Interviews ♦ Performance ♦ Products ♦ And So Forth

TBP Interviews Elizabeth Cunningham

When we open Elizabeth Cunningham's *The Passion of Mary Magdalen*, we find our heroine "shackled and displayed on a slave block at the southwest corner of the Temple of Castor and Pollux in the heart of the Roman Forum." Maeve tells us that she had been "kicked out of one of the finest schools in the world, the druid college on the Isle of Mona."

What was she doing at a druid college? What happened to her there? How on earth did she get to Rome?

The answers are finally at hand. The first volume of *The Maeve Chronicles*, originally published as *Daughter of the Shining Isles*, is now available as *Magdalen Rising*, the prequel to *The Passion of Mary Magdalen*. (And we are promised a sequel, *Bright, Dark Madonna*, as well.)

You have all heard of his birth in Bethlehem in a stable—though his mother told me it was really a cave, and she's vague about the location. You know the story of the attendant animals, the bedazzled shepherds, and the Magi who followed the long-tailed star. But did you know that the star had a twin? The sister star chose a tiny island in a northern sea. Its long tail lashed cold waters. Far from that holy birth in the hills, brightness rose from beneath the wave.

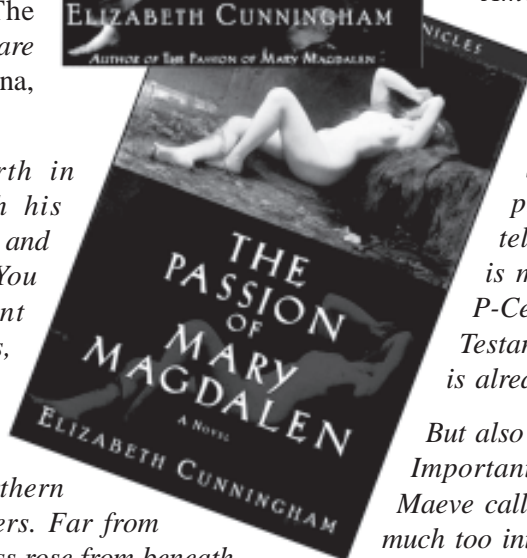
That was me (p. 3).

Daughter of eight mothers who are Warrior Witches, born on Tir na mBan, the Island of Women, young Maeve is headstrong and curious about every element of her small world. On the day of her first bleeding, she sneaks away from her mothers to a sacred precinct where she meets the Cailleach and has her first experience with scrying. Who does she see in the sacred well? An Appended One. (Well, she's never seen a human male before.) She soon begins school with the Cailleach and learns geography, Latin, Greek, and Aramaic.

A few years later, Maeve is taken to Mona, where she is enrolled in the druid college.

Among the other students is the Stranger. It's her Appended One, a young Jew they call Esus (after a minor Celtic god), who has been told by an old woman to study among the Keltoi. To qualify, prospective students are required to tell their genealogies. Because Esus is more fluent in Aramaic than Q- or P-Celtic, when he recites most of the Old Testament, Maeve is his translator. She is already in love with him.

But also living on the island is a VID (Very Important Druid) named Lovernios, whom Maeve calls Foxface. This red-haired druid is much too interested in Esus, and his interest in Maeve is ominous. Our heroine has been a rebel from the day of her birth. She has trouble following the rules at the druid college. She is outspoken. She is



adventuresome. There are initiations. She is impregnated. Her baby is taken from her. There is a trial. As the book ends, Maeve has been sentenced to ride a coracle past the ninth wave of the sea:

Orphaned, exiled, the sea and the sky became my mother and father. I drank the rain, and I milked my own breasts with one hand, licking the drops that fell on the other. Often my boat was surrounded by dolphins. They sang and talked to me....

Then—and this is my last distinct memory of the voyage—I heard a voice: the Cailleach’s, Dwywnyn’s, my mothers’, Moira’s. In different ways, the voice belonged to all of them.

“Lie down, Maeve Rhoad, Little Bright One. Cleave to the bottom of the boat. We’ve got to step up the pace a little. There’s going to be some rough weather, honey, but you’ll be all right. Lie on your back. Trust us” (p. 402).

When I read this the first time, I shot off an immediate email to Elizabeth—what’s going on here? Where on earth is Maeve? What’s going to happen to her?

Elizabeth Cunningham and I have been friends since before either of us had a computer. We used to write cheering letters to each other on paper and mail them in envelopes. We’d talk about listening to the voices of the characters in our novels, about plot details and exposition, about the mechanics of verb tense and tricky points of punctuation. We talked about my son and her son and daughter. We talked about fairy tales and novels by other authors that we admired. One night a few years ago we sat in a restaurant in Glendale, California, and talked about who Maeve really was and where she was going. A couple years later, we walked the streets of Greenwich Village in New York City and talked about our adventures with our publishers. As I recall, that was a morning when we were both extremely frustrated with our publishers.

Elizabeth is the best writer of Goddess fiction living on the planet today. She works hard at her craft. She is also a mesmerizing public speaker. If she comes on a book tour to where you live, be sure to go and see her. On her Passion tour, she opened her talk by reciting the Prologue. I looked around the room. Everyone was spellbound by her voice. That’s what good writing does to you.

Here is one of our recent conversations, this one conducted via email.

TBP: *Tell us a little about your background. What church did you grow up in? What event in your life brought you to your present path? Which is? How does your church background influence your novels? Maybe you can talk a bit about Return of the Goddess here.*

EC: I grew up literally in the Episcopal Church. Family lore has it that my late father was the ninth generation of Episcopal priests. Until I was twelve years old, I lived in the rectory of Grace Church in a very small town in the Hudson Valley of New York. Next door to the church was an abandoned estate with overgrown woods and wild, tangled gardens—the stuff of enchantment. The edge of the magical wood was posted with No Trespassing signs. In the Episcopal Church we say, in the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” No one thought to explain to me the difference between trespassing on private property and some awful transgression for which we had to beg forgiveness from a frightening and invisible God, so you can see that “trespassing” took on a charged meaning. Once I did step over the wall into the wood, and I even broke into the gate house, which looked to me like the Witch’s candy house in Hansel and Gretel. I never told my parents what I’d done, but I was sick with fear that the town policeman (whose name was Mr. Cunningham, like my father!) was going to take me to jail for trespassing.

Eventually, we got permission to walk in the wood, which even boasted a falling down mansion that I naturally believed was haunted. This wood also bordered the school property. So for me there was the horribly mundane world of school, the charged but dangerous world of the Church where God the Father and the Holy Ghost all lurked. (Jesus was at least visible in the stained glass windows and relatively benign, walking on water or rescuing a lost sheep.) Then there was the magical fairy world of the wood. So I have always been a “walker between the worlds,” as I am sure many children are.

The Return of the Goddess is set in the church and wood of my childhood, but tells the story of a minister’s wife who is astonished to find a powerful female figure taking shape in her hands while she plays with her children’s homemade playdough. Her search for the meaning of this “graven image,” so to speak, takes her over that falling down stone wall into a wood she comes to recognize as a grove sacred to the goddess.

There is no single defining event that led me to my current path, which I don’t know how to name. I am a priestess and interfaith minister and counselor. I celebrate the Wheel of the Year and the phases of the moon. So does Maeve, my

Celtic Mary Magdalen. Like Maeve I can also describe myself as a lover of Jesus, though not a Christian. For I no longer belong to a church.

TBP: *I know that it took fourteen years for The Wild Mother to be published. What inspired you to write a book about Lilith and set it at a university? Do you want to comment on the market for Goddess fiction and how it may have changed since the early nineties? Perhaps you can give hope to young novelists with your reply?*

EC: *The Wild Mother* is the first novel that I wrote, though it was the second one published. I suppose I set it at a university because I was in college at the time. For one class I was reading feminist theology, and in an anthology there was a short piece, by a writer whose name I can't remember, that suggested that perhaps Lilith (in apocryphal lore the first wife of Adam) had left Eden of her own accord and maybe she had later made an alliance with Eve. That was the germ of the story. I remember walking around saying, "Lilith, Lilith, Lilith" and liking the way the name made my tongue dart back and forth like a snake's. Though there is a university setting in *The Wild Mother*, of much more importance is the mysterious Empty Land where Lilith and the other wild women live and where Ionia, her daughter, longs to go.

At the time I wrote *The Wild Mother*, I had never heard of the Goddess or goddess fiction. I was just telling the story that came to me. To tell the truth, although the divine feminine is prominent in all my work, I never think of myself as a Goddess writer. I think of myself a *storyteller*. For years I was told that my novels did not fit any known (read: marketable) genre. For awhile people talked about magical realism as a genre. I don't know that it ever took hold. Now people are trying out visionary fiction as a market category. Oracular literature is another term that is emerging. *The Maeve Chronicles* have also been called historical fantasy. I just keep writing, and am happy when the stories find their readers, who seem to be of all ages, genders, and religious backgrounds.

The publishing industry is just that—an industry, and there are more and more conglomerates in publishing, distribution, and bookselling. It's not pretty or happy-making. On a more positive note, more independent presses are springing up. For example Creatrix Books, publishers of my new collection of poetry, *Wild Mercy*, is specifically dedicated to publishing fiction, poetry, and scholarly work about the Goddess. That's a hopeful sign.

TBP: *What inspired you to write How to Spin Gold? Do you like fairy tales?*

EC: I love fairytales. I think they teach us everything we need to know about storytelling—and life itself: how to be courageous in the face of danger, resourceful in times of hardship, kind to strangers and animals, discerning in making choices that are often not what they seem.

The idea for *How to Spin Gold* came to me when I was about eight months pregnant with my first child and having enforced bed rest because of high blood pressure. There was a freak April storm that year and the power lines snapped. I remember lying in bed and watching the daffodils we had picked just before the storm track the course of the sun, even though they were cut flowers in a vase. (As you can imagine, that was the last time I had so much leisure!) It came to me then that any experience could be transformative. A little rhyme came into my head: "Take the dung and make it flower/take the pain and make it power/let your own fear make you bold/take the straw and spin, spin, spin the gold." I thought I would write a short poem from the point of view of a female Rumpelstiltskin—only that's not *her* name. And having no name, she is, in a sense, invisible. The short poem turned into a short novel, begun just before the birth of my son and completed just after the birth of my daughter. The nameless narrator is a midwife who lives (of course) in a wild wood and is considered a witch. So this fairytale is also very much about the childbearing and the longing for a child.

TBP: *What is your writing practice? Describe your writing room. Do you write by hand? At the computer?*

EC: My current writing room was carved out of the attic when my children were teenagers who played loud music. It has large windows that look out at a stream winding through the woods, and it has a door that opens onto a deck. Every spring a pair of phoebes come to nest over the door, and I get to watch them coming and going as they build their nest and later feed their babies. On the walls of the writing room, I have all kinds of drawings and paintings mostly made by friends or myself and a poem I treasure written by my daughter: "Fiction, for my mother who taught me the love of words." I have an altar where a Maeve doll and a Lilith doll, made for me by a reader, loll in splendor. (Do check out Kelli's website: <http://www.dancinggoddessdolls.com/>)

I write every morning and, when my schedule permits, I write again in the afternoon after a brief nap. I used to write a hand draft first, always. There was a time when I wrote two hand drafts. I am a terrible typist and only use two fingers. How I ever managed to type a complete manuscript on a typewriter I do not know. With the advent of word processing, I began to do revisions on the computer. With my novel-in-progress, the third of *The Maeve Chronicles*, I am, for the

first time, writing the rough draft on computer. Because of e-mail (a blessing and a curse), I do so much composing on the computer that typing seems easier than it used to. Also, now that I have a committed publisher, I am hoping to complete the next book more quickly. The challenge is to let the rough draft be rough and not flip into edit mode prematurely.

TBP: *Describe the research (including the traveling) you did for Maeve.*

EC: *The Maeve Chronicles*, set in the first century CE, featuring the Celtic Mary Magdalen, require massive, ongoing research. Though my character is entirely fictional, I want to get the settings for her story as accurate as possible. So the first thing I do and continue to do is read and read and read—books about the time and writings from the time (in translation). The first century Celts had an oral tradition, and Maeve's task, as a bardic student, was to memorize a huge body of literature. A full-fledged druid (after twenty years of training) was a walking library. The contemporary writing about Celts was by Roman and Greek historians. Later the stories passed down orally through generations were recorded by monks—who, as Maeve notes, probably got a lot of vicarious thrills recounting the bold exploits of such larger-than-life characters as her namesake Queen Maeve of Connacht. There is much more historical material on the Roman Empire and on first century Judea and Galilee. I read widely, and eventually find the scholars I most trust. Those books I keep close to hand and come to love and appreciate as friends.

Over the more than fifteen years I've spent writing *The Maeve Chronicles*, I have also traveled to most of the books' locations. For *Magdalen Rising*, I visited the Hebrides to give me a sense of the Isle of Women where Maeve

grew up, and Anglesey, Wales, the site of an actual first century druid college. For *The Passion of Mary Magdalen*, I visited Rome and environs as well as Israel. Southern France will figure in *Bright Dark Madonna*, and also Turkey which I have yet to visit. Always the land itself adds something to the story, not just in terms of atmosphere but sometimes plot, too. On Anglesey I encountered the local legend of Dwywnyn, a saint who lived on a tiny tidal island (which I walked to) and had a well full of oracular eels, who could predict a person's love luck. Dwywnyn and her island became a pivotal part of *Magdalen Rising*.

TBP: *Mary Magdalen is Really Big these days. How are your books different from those of Margaret Starbird? From The Da Vinci Code?*

EC: My books differ from Margaret Starbird's because they are strictly fictional. I am not putting forth a theory about who Mary Magdalen might have been, I am telling a story. Unlike *The Da Vinci Code*, which is a thriller with a contemporary setting that makes reference to Mary Magdalen, my novel is set in the first century and is told from her point of view.

From what I understand, both Dan Brown and Margaret Starbird are very concerned with Jesus and Mary Magdalen's blood descendants. Though my Maeve comes from a culture where lineage was of great importance, she learns a radically different way of relating to people when she is exiled from the British Isles and sold into slavery in Rome. She survives (and ultimately thrives) because she creates deep friendships with people of all races, sexual orientations, and cultural backgrounds. Temple Magdalen, the community she founds with her friends, is a place where the stranger is made welcome. In my novels, neither Maeve nor Jesus ever converts to the other's

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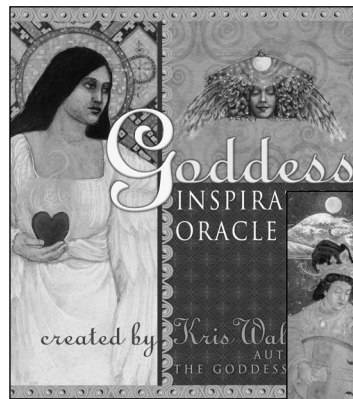
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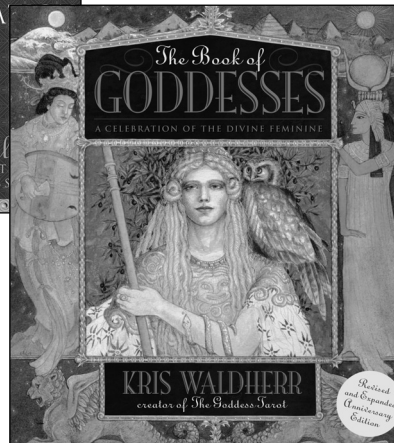


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religion. He remains a Jew and she remains a pagan. What they have in common is a practice of radical kindness, embracing the outcast. Jesus did not exalt blood ties. His family at one point came to take him away because they thought he was "out of his mind." He refused to see them, saying, "Who is my mother, who is my brother? The one who does the will of God." So although in my story Maeve and Jesus are lovers, and they do have a child, I do not see them as founders of a sacred dynasty. We are all the children of the divine, who are called, like Maeve and Jesus, to mediate the divine and human experience of being incarnate on this earth.

TBP: *Why a Celtic Magdalen? How did Maeve come to you? How long has she been talking to you? Is she as persistent with you as she seems to be in the books? Explain what you and I have talked about: that maybe Maeve or the Goddess or other characters dictate the story, but the author is in charge of spelling, syntax, etc. That is, talk about the craft of writing and how your work at your craft interfaces with Maeve's voice.*

EC: Oddly enough, I did not set out to write about Mary Magdalen, Celtic or otherwise. I first encountered the character I came to know as Maeve when I had finished writing *The Return of the Goddess* and decided to take a

break from writing to explore visual art. Madge, as she introduced herself, appeared as a simple line drawing of an ample woman sitting naked in a kitchen having a cup of coffee at 3:00 in the afternoon. She quickly took on color. I drew with magic markers and her hair required a neon shade called fiery orange. Soon the drawings had captions, for her voice was as fresh and irrepressible as her image. She told me she was a painter, who supported herself as a prostitute—because it's as hard to sell art as it is to sell novels. Here's my next character, I thought. I proposed a novel about a retired prostitute who moves to Maine to be a painter and has all sorts of troubles adjusting to small-town life. Madge said, "Honey, I'm not ready to be a *retired* anything." Then one strangely balmy full-moon night in February (near the time of the Celtic feast of Brigid), I was lying outside under a full moon, and I suddenly I thought Madge, Magdalen. Hmmm, a lot of the same letters, Red hair, Celts. Celtic Mary Madgalen. The next moment I had goose bumps all over, because I knew: *That's who Madge is!* When I asked her if she would star in a novel about the Celtic Mary Magdalen, she smiled hugely and said, "Finally, you figured it out!"

I have been asked many times if I channel Maeve. The flip answer is, *I wish!* I listen for her voice and do my best to be true to it, but I do not take dictation. I write and re-write and

hone the prose, so that (I hope) it sounds so natural, so effortless, as if Maeve was there with you, speaking to you, and ultimately she is. I believe Maeve is an archetypal force, and I have chosen to be in partnership with her in this particular way. I don't think I want to explain it any more than that. As Jesus remarks to Maeve at one point, explanations are not a good idea. How and where stories and characters come from is in the realm of mystery. Actually writing a book, bringing it to completion is hard work. But I'd rather do than work that anything else.

TBP: *What have you heard from church-going Christians about your take on Jesus and his story? Do you know if they're reading your books?*

EC: Christians are as varied a lot as any other group of people, and I have had good press from some Roman Catholic and Episcopal writers. At one reading, a Dominican nun embraced me and said, "On with the revolution, sister!" I recently performed a piece adapted from *The Passion of Mary Magdalen* called "An Unorthodox Easter." The performance included singing, dancing, and drumming, and several Episcopal nuns sat in the front row drums and cow bells in hand. They had also brought drums and rattles to share with others. Afterwards they

bought books for their community.

In general, I think my readers pagan, Christian, and otherwise, are self-selected. I have only once, at a public library reading, encountered angry Christians. They had seen a notice about the event and had come prepared to protest. They had not read the book, nor did they purchase a copy. They did not read fiction, they informed me. And they chastised me for writing fiction about Mary Magdalen and Jesus, as some people might be led astray and think my story was true. I pointed out that there are four Gospels in the Bible, each told in a different way for a different audience, and that in fact the evangelists were more like novelists than historians. But this argument cut no ice.

It's not just Conservative Christians who have become literal-minded. In contemporary American culture, we tend to mistake fact for truth. We are obsessed with so-called reality TV shows. We seem to have lost sight of poetic truth. Storytelling can be a numinous healing art. Maeve's warrior-witch mothers have a saying, "A story is true if it's well told." Amen to that, I say, and blessed be!

TBP: *I have no doubt that Elizabeth and I will continue to engage in these*

conversations about our writing. Just now, I am rereading the final pages of The Passion of Magdalen. Maeve enters the tomb of Jesus, which is of course empty. She encounters the gardener. She recognizes who he is. They make love.

Then he was gone.

I was alone in the garden. I looked down at my naked body, golden with the light of that place. It seemed a shame to cover such glory. But he had asked me to tell the others. It was time to go. I went back to the empty tomb to look for my tunic, which would be filthy. On the empty bed, I found instead vestments of fine gold cloth, just like the ones in which we robed Isis on high holidays. Beside the robe lay a crown of fresh, wild roses, the kind that grew at Temple Magdalen. There was an ankh for my right hand, and a sistrum for my left.

You will excuse me for not being more surprised (p. 613).

Elizabeth has told me that in Bright, Dark Madonna, the third book of the trilogy, Maeve will have a conversation (or several) with the future St. Paul and that she will go home. Like all of her readers, I'm eager to follow Maeve's life to the very end. Write faster, Elizabeth. Write faster!

Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D. is the author of *Pagan Every Day: Finding the Extraordinary in Our Ordinary Lives* (RedWheel/Weiser, 2006), a unique daybook of daily meditations, stories, and activities. Her earlier books are *Finding New Goddesses*, *Quicksilver Moon*, *Goddess Meditations*, and *Practicing the Presence of the Goddess*. Her day job is freelance editing for people who don't want to embarrass themselves in print. Barbara lives in Southern California. You can visit her site at:

www.barbaraardinger.com

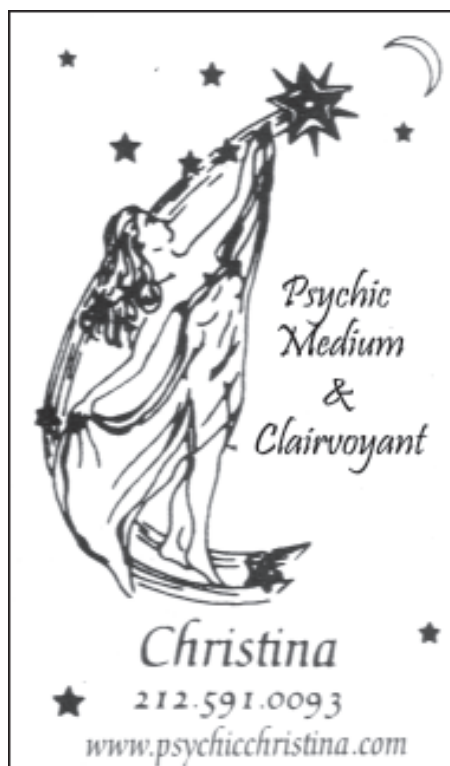


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The Lover's Path Tarot (premier edition)

by Kris Waldherr

**Published by US Games Systems, 2006
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\$20.00**

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The work of Kris Waldherr never fails to inspire me. Her *Goddess Tarot* is one of



my all-time favorites, her joyful calendars have graced my walls, and her web sites are always a pleasure to visit. In *The Lover's Path Tarot*, we have the beautiful artwork we have come to expect from

Waldherr, we have her wonderfully insightful approach to tarot, and we also have her skillful retelling of love stories from around the world and throughout time.

Each of the major arcana cards is represented by a couple from a famous love story—from history or myth. We see many familiar lovers—Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, Arthur and Guinevere, to name a few. The meaning of each card closely follows traditional interpretation, but also draws upon the stories of these lovers, and through their stories we can understand each card in a unique way. For example, card IX, known as Contemplation in *The Lover's Path Tarot*, but traditionally The Hermit, shows Peter Abelard, a medieval theologian, painting a picture of his beloved Eloise. Their love was secret and forbidden, and they were forced to spend their lives apart from one another. The card reflects a need to concentrate on relationship with oneself, rather than relationships with others, as well as a “retreat into inner life.”

As each of the tarot suits is aligned with a specific element, it is also attributed with the energy of a specific couple, selected from the major arcana. This is similar to Waldherr's approach in the *Goddess Tarot*, in which each suit reflects the energy of a specific goddess. The suit of cups is represented by Tristan and Isolde, whose story demonstrates “extreme emotions”; the suit of staves is represented by Siegfried and Brunnhilde, for the force of their love; Cupid and Psyche are chosen to represent the suit of arrows (traditionally swords), representing wisdom and transformation; and the suit of coins is represented by the story of Danae and Zeus, for Danae's ability to create her own independent fortune. Viewing the suits in this light brings an added dimension to understanding them. Meanings of the major and minor arcana cards tend to specifically focus on relationship—not only on how we might relate to others, but on how we relate to ourselves and our lives, as well. This unique approach enriches our readings with new insight, and proves to be highly useful for self-discovery and personal development.



The set is packaged with an instruction booklet written by Waldherr, and a terrific, glossy spread sheet with diagramed instructions for five effective spreads. I highly recommend this lovely set!

~ review by Nellie Levine

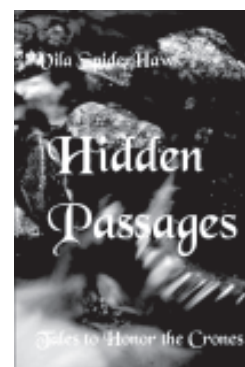
Hidden Passages: Tales to Honor the Crones

by Vila SpiderHawk

**Spilled Candy Books, 2006
pp. 292, \$17.95**

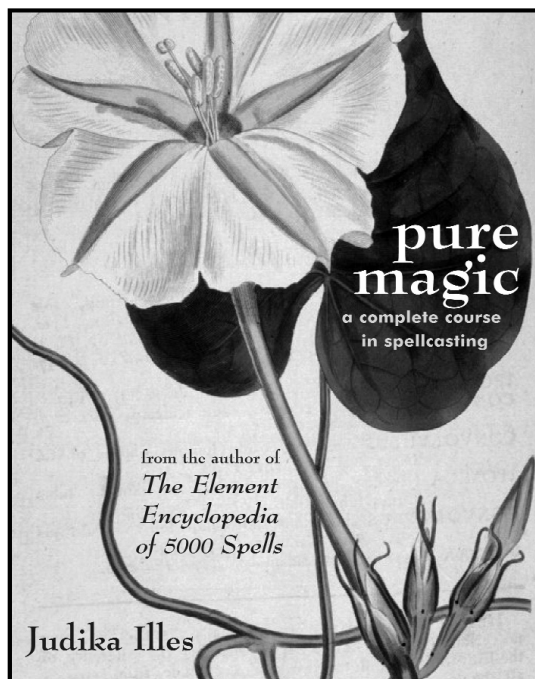
It isn't news that older women are often portrayed in a negative light in our youth-centered culture. Some of us—those of us who have marked 50 or more birthdays—have even played a role in that, believing in our youth that we should “Never trust anyone over thirty.”

But there is a far older adage we live by these days: “With age comes wisdom.” In *Hidden Passages*, a collection of eight short stories,



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author Vila SpiderHawk celebrates women who have reached their crone years and are living them with passion, unmitigated determination, and above all, grace.

Here we meet Mima Po, a Holocaust survivor who, with the aid of the Roman goddess Juno Lucina, shows a little girl how to open her eyes and celebrate rather than fear individual differences. In "Nanu's Story" we meet Tichu, a young woman who has been horribly mistreated by other members of her tribe. Cast out, Tichu wanders into the realm of Grandmother Spider, who bestows Tichu

with knowledge and magical gifts; gifts that, despite her mistreatment, Tichu cannot wait to share with her tribe. In the last story, we meet Lucinda, an elderly nursing home resident who is so much more than what she appears and helps a younger Crone steer her way through matters of life and death. These are just a sampling of the Wise Women readers will encounter in *Hidden Passages*.

There is plenty of magic in these stories, magic that is written in an often subtle and always believable manner. You won't find any vindictive hags turning young men into

frogs, or other equally ridiculous feats of prestidigitation. What you will find are wise, skillful women passing on the secrets of reaping what you sow; of seeing beauty in what, at first glance, is not beautiful; and the loving hands of the goddess reaching out and embracing Her daughters of all ages. This approach to magic—and the goddess—makes these stories an irresistible read to maiden, mother, and crone alike.

~ review by Smoky Trudeau

The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish
 by Neil Gaiman
 Illustrated by Dave McKean
 Harper Collins 2006
 pp. 64, \$7.99 (paperback)



A creative suspension of disbelief allows you to savor the quirky events that followed after an oblivious newspaper-reading father was traded for two goldfish. This is dead-pan, sotto-voiced humor at its best through the eyes of a young boy. Father, after a series of interesting trades—a gorilla mask, a guitar, a pet rabbit—is far across town by the time Mother

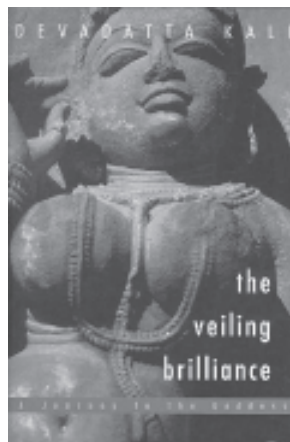
shows up, finds him missing and sends the miscreant with little sister out to recover him and bring him home.

The collage illustration and hand-print style of print is an ever-changing visual treat for the eye, adding substance to the tale itself. Once you read this book and explore its illustrations you will press it upon all others around you to enjoy it as well.

~ review by Kareth Bodman



The Veiling Brilliance
 by Devadatta Kali
 Red Wheel/Weiser, 2006
 pp. 245, \$18.95



Hindu goddesses have always scared me. Whether it was Durga on the back of her ferocious lion or Kali with her girdle of severed heads, I was more likely to run for my life rather than embrace and worship these ferocious deities. I prefer a much gentler incarnation of the Goddess.

The Veiling Brilliance changed my mind. Inspired by one of the most sacred Hindu texts, the *Devimahatmya*, *The Veiling Brilliance* makes the Hindu supreme

Goddess, or Devi, and all her many incarnations accessible, understandable, and, yes, even embraceable, and does so with prose so achingly beautiful I found myself re-reading passage after passage, savoring words as if they were a fine wine.

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Here we meet Suratha, a king who has lost his kingdom; Samadhi, a merchant who has been betrayed by his wife and sons; and their teacher, the guru Medhas, who guides them on a spiritual quest which promises, ultimately, to save them from self-destruction. At first reluctant, the two rapidly become eager students, each embarking on his quest for salvation, finding the answers they seek in two very different ways.

Medhas introduces his pupils to Devi, the Great Goddess, explaining that everyone and everything in the heavens and on earth is Devi in physical form. He tells of the great battle with the asuras, or demons, where the Devi does battle in the guise of many different goddesses. It is here I—

like Suratha and Samadhi—learned Durga is not only a fierce warrior who destroys evil, but is also a compassionate mother goddess who bestows unconditional grace to those who honor her; that Kali's bloodthirsty and violent appearance is a symbol of the primal energy or reality, life rising from the ruins of battle.

The book is so full of wisdom it is difficult to absorb in only one reading. Wondering how I would ever keep track of all the wonderful lessons, I was delighted when I got to the end of the book and found a chapter-by-chapter guide to the story and the lessons contained therein.

Lovers of fine prose will take great delight in *The Veiling Brilliance* from the sheer beauty of Devadatta Kali's words. But

perhaps more importantly, the book will demystify the mysterious and often frightening world of the Devi and all her many forms.

~ review by Smoky Trudeau

*When I stand before God
at the end of my life, I
would hope that I would
not have a single bit of
talent left and could say,
"I used everything you
gave me."*

~ Erma Bombeck


**Essential Reiki Teaching Manual: A
Companion Guide for Reiki Healers**
by Diane Stein
Crossing Press, 2007
pp. 147, \$18.95

There is simply no better book on Reiki than Stein's comprehensive handbook. That's saying a lot in a field where there is no shortage of fine books that introduce the healing modality or add to the novice's training with complex techniques integrating sound, meditation and spiritual understanding. The beauty of the practice is that it requires none of this complexity, yet rewards the addition of expertise and creativity. While I have since become a Reiki Master, I first learned of Reiki from Stein's earlier book, *All Women are Healers* (reprinted by Crossing Press, 1990). Stein's handbook faced some criticism for making available the secret symbols of the art, but she makes her reasons clear in the foreword: "In this time of change and crisis for people and the

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"This work is a fun introduction to the pagan calendar and its implications for daily living. It's good to hear about the old festivals and reasons to celebrate practically everything. Life gets new dimensions, new meaning. Well done!"
—Z Budapest, author of *Grandmother of Time*, *Grandmother Moon*, and *Celestial Wisdom*

"Visiting Barbara Ardinger's book one day at a time will give you rewards of knowledge, wisdom and a relationship with deities you may not have heard of before. There are risks of course; she may make you think."
—Grey Cat, author of *Deepening Witchcraft: Advancing Skills and Knowledge*

Barbara Ardinger teaches us that a contemporary spiritual experience can show up in some of the most unexpected places—such as *The Muppet Show* and *Dirty Dancing*. This is not your ordinary goddess-a-day book or spell recipe book! Included are goddesses, gods, and festivals from around the world; pagan elements in literature and poetry; lessons from history; famous contemporary pagans, magazines, and Web sites; and popular culture, including books, Broadway, movies, and television.

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planet, healing is too desperately needed for it to be kept secret or exclusive any longer," although she also asserts that "this book cannot be a substitute" for a teacher and her attunements. The explosion of the Grassroots Reiki movement clearly shows that her instincts have been proven right. While there is an element of truth that people in our capitalist culture do not value anything free, at least Reiki energies cannot be "misused" or become harmful in the hands of the less than wholly engaged.

The book sets out the principles and practices of Reiki with clear language and personal examples. The text is accompanied by copious illustrations. She begins with a brief history of the modality and its roots in Japan and India, and then delves into the practice itself. Readers can learn how the healing sessions proceed both from the healer and the recipient point of view. Stein connects Reiki to other healing modalities and systems for understanding the body and its health, such as the connections between Reiki hand positions and the chakras. Introducing the symbols in the chapter on second degree, Stein includes phonetic pronunciation guides as well as diagrams showing how to draw the symbols (an important part for focusing the mind).

The last part of the book focuses on advanced work, including teaching. Stein's enthusiasm for teaching and her focus on healing the planet fuel her desire to have as many people as possible learn, practice and pass on Reiki. While many upper-level Reiki handbooks focus more on the business side or developing a practice, Stein's primary goal is always healing on the individual and planetary level. She shares her teaching experiences not to instill a sense of her authority, but rather to demystify the role of teacher. For those who decide to teach, there is a handy appendix with the symbols and attunement steps which provides a quick refresher before you begin a class, an invaluable asset.

For those who are serious about teaching, Stein has recently completed a handbook focused on teaching skills. From her fifteen years of experience, Stein has put together

a comprehensive, hands-on tool, "written to make teaching easy, to expand the scope of current teaching methods, and to tempt Reiki students and healers to become teachers." Because she has focused primarily on teaching women, Stein has become familiar with the reasons many of them shy away from teaching—primarily "a simple lack of self-confidence," for

those who have never had power-within/empowerment seldom know how to take it when it is offered, and rarely see themselves as powerful enough to accept it when it is set before them.

Stein sees Reiki as a powerful force for healing individuals, but also as a force that the universe desperately needs. This manual helps those who share the vision to develop the skills to do so. Familiarizing yourself with Reiki treatments and attunements is only half the struggle. Teaching the skills in an organized and comprehensive way will be a lot easier with this book in hand.

Stein gives tips both practical and thoughtful, ranging from preparation of your teaching/healing space to dealing with emotionally clingy clients and "energy vampires." She emphasizes the importance of practice to feel comfortable and confident with a class. Her practical tips cover in detail preparing a teaching space, dealing with group dynamics, keeping the lessons on track and on time, as well as spelling out expectations for workshops at each level, all based on her years of experience teaching Reiki around the country. Stein includes an important chapter on how to take care of yourself as a teacher and healer, something enthusiastic new teachers forget to do, as well as a final chapter of handouts that can be photocopied (and include proper attribution of their source). Everything is covered in Stein's straightforward style, with ample anecdotes and practical suggestions. This new manual will indeed prove essential to Reiki healers ready to make the transition to teachers.

~ review by Kate Laity

**The Women We Become:
Myths, Folktales, and Stories about
Growing Older**
by Ann G. Thomas, Ed.D.
Volcano Press, 2004
pp. 288, \$17.95

My Inner Peter Pan just *had* to ask: What's



a never-say-die grrl like you doing with a book like this? Caught red-handed with a self-help manual for aging women, my rebellious Inner Tinker Bell squinted her pixie-green eyes slantwise, pressed

her lips together resolutely, and shook her golden head so vigorously in her refusal to reply that dazzling clouds of funky fairy dust flew out in all directions. Not quite disguising the fact that I went right on reading, I might add. Note to self: it never hurts to have a Plan B, even in Neverland.

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The author of this particular plan, so to speak, is a licensed psychotherapist with more than thirty years' experience counseling midlife and older women seeking to come to terms with their own mortality and the ongoing limitations of life. Imperfect relationships, hurt feelings, unmet needs, unfulfilled dreams and desires, and other all-too-common hallmarks of the human condition are thoroughly and thoughtfully explored with in-depth regard to the special considerations of women's experiences. To illustrate her often eloquently expressed insights and theories, Dr. Thomas presents us with some compelling examples from her own client cases. She also includes a number of symbol-filled traditional stories from diverse cultures. Many of these tales feature an elderly woman as mentor figure. "The Old Woman Who Lived in a Vinegar Bottle," "The String Bean That Went Through the Roof of the World," "What the Snake Had in Mind," "Grandmother Spider Steals the Sun," and "The Witch's Shoes" are some of the most vivid. Related chapter topic titles are "The Reality of Death," "Accepting Life's Limits," "An Internal Shadow," "Relating to the Dark Feminine," "The Good Mother," "The Masculine Within," and "The Search for Meaning." Stalwart stuff, indeed.

Aging women who struggle to overcome their fear of death, figure out their lives' ultimate meaning, and attain some sense of inner peace about the whole hullabaloo, are likely to find this volume especially healing and reassuring. But then, I suspect most women of any age and orientation would be drawn in by this thought-provoking narrative, whatever their reactions to it. The book is well written, balanced, and eminently reasonable. Maybe, for some of us, a little *too* balanced and reasonable. Some cantankerously contrary and adventuresome souls like me might not exactly agree with the author's basic premise that we need to "resolve" the "issue" of death—that, if we do not, we risk remaining in panicked denial at some critical level of our psyches, only to "grow into old women pretending to be something we're not," becoming "caricatures of ourselves." Oh, dear. I do appreciate the author's obvious good

intentions. Maybe some of my own disagreement on this point is a matter of semantics, or profoundly different applications of preferred imagery. But I'm not so sure a great many of us *ever* "resolve" the issue of death, no matter how much or how little we may ponder it, and try (or not) to wrap our brains around the mere idea of it. Besides, I rather like the idea of becoming a caricature of myself someday. Who knows, it might be fun!

Dr. Thomas states rather disconcertingly that by midlife the task of finding and making one's place in the world should be completed—that we need to "let go and make the transition to an internal focus." With all due respect to the good doctor: no, no, and more no. I have had both inward and outward focus ever since I can remember, and I see no reason to stop having them now. These two kinds of foci aren't ever mutually exclusive in my world. Maybe the author didn't put any of her own career goals on hold while raising children, but many of us did, at least in part, and are thus using our middle-aged years not to "let go," but to continue to hang on for dear life, still trying our damndest to manifest some more of our dearest dreams at long last.

I turned 55 a handful of days before this writing. Funny thing, but I don't feel like having my bosom buddies throw me a Red Hat Society shindig or "Croning" ritual any more than I felt at this time last year. Or the year before, or the year before that, which is to say, not at all.

~ review by Lady Isadora

The Voynich Manuscript
by **Gerry Kennedy and Rob Churchill**
Inner Traditions, 2006
pp. 292, \$18.95

Literary adventurers pounce upon the opportunity to become enchanted by mysterious codes, their origins and their authors shrouded in secrecy. Such



curiosities allow their readers to take up magnifying glasses and burn the midnight oil, fancying themselves the one to provide decades-hidden insight. It is with such vigor that

one approaches *The Voynich Manuscript* by Gerry Kennedy and Rob Churchill. The authors deliver a thorough exploration of a potentially insightful Goddess-oriented manuscript against a paternalistic playground of men attempting to understand and exploit it. To that end, this book is more about the story of the key figures and life around the manuscript than it is on providing a solid focus on decoding the codex itself. Found in 1912 by Wilfrid Voynich, the legacy of the manuscript came under public scrutiny, where it remains still. Kennedy learned at the funeral of a family member that Voynich was a distant relative of his. Through that lens the introduction of the text is quite personal, though the book quickly progresses into academic detailing of the manuscript's supposed journey into the present.

Through many conjectures about the linguistic origins of the text and the possible influences of its outlandish astrological and horticultural illustrations, there is still little known about the origins of the manuscript. Cryptologists may enjoy the abundance of chapters devoted to the meticulous methods employed in attempting to decipher the code. More esoteric types may resonate with the scant pages lending it to being a written account of glossolalia (speaking in tongues), or the artful result of medieval mental illness. The authors even give rich exploration to the possibility that the manuscript is a hoax. Whatever impression readers take from the research behind this book about the Voynich Manuscript, without doubt they will have been impressed by the legacy and mystery of its path.

~ review by Kelley Harrell

Pure Magic
A Complete Course in Spellcasting
 by Judika Illes
 Red Wheel Weiser, 2007
 pp. 304, \$16.95



Judika Illes, author of four books, including the best-selling *The Element Encyclopedia of 5000 Spells*, has come up with a magic primer that is essential to the library of the

novice and experienced alike.

If you don't know Voodoo from Hoodoo or what the best-dressed candle wears, you soon will learn. Illes covers a vast amount of useful topics for the magic practitioner—from the ancient art of root magic (although I am not too sure where I would find High John the Conqueror or Adam and Eve root), to the meaning of the elements, magical tools, animal allies/totems, and spirit communication, plus a very impressive section on botanicals, a mainstay of any magical spell.

Pure Magic reminds us that “*Real magic, the magic of the Earth, is Pure Magic,*” Illes goes on to say, “*Magic in its purest form consists of a dialogue between Earth and yourself, a dialogue whereby you are able to express your desires, receive and recognize a response and are then able to make your wishes and desires come true.*” She reminds us that we don't have to be a TV character like Sabrina the Teenage Witch, Samantha Stevens or even Harry Potter to make magic work in our lives. Rather, Illes reminds us that magic is our birthright, plain and simple. The only requirements needed for *Pure Magic* are an awareness of the natural rhythms, energies, powers and patterns of the Earth.

Part three of *Pure Magic* gets down to the nitty-gritty of spellcasting. It is here that the reader gleans knowledge of what it takes to make a spell more effective. We become privy to the Magic Calendar, Where to Practice Magic and Words of

Power, Will Your Spells Work?, and What are the Realistic Expectations of Magic? What you won't find in this book are any spells designed to do harm to another, be it human or animal. Magic just does not operate that way.

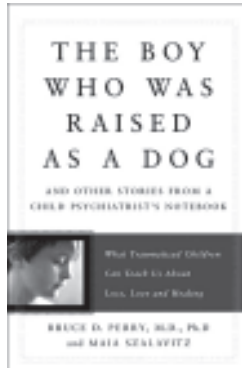
What you will find in *Pure Magic* is a plethora of enticing spells: healing with candles, planting a healing garden, a luscious Milk & Honey Prosperity Bath—(it may not make you rich but I can guarantee you will have the smoothest skin around!), a Spice Necklace to Relieve Grief, a Money Dream Pillow. Also included is a great selection of beauty treatments that can't fail to make you feel magical.

So get busy growing a money garden filled with plants to attract prosperity, make a Lover Dream of Me Pillow, and, when you travel, be sure to take along your Happy Trails Travel Charm to avoid getting lost. This is one book you will refer to again and again!

~ review by Katherine Turcotte

The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog
 by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D., and Maia Szalavitz
 Basic Books, 2006
 pp. 275, \$26.00

In reading *The Boy Who Was Raised as a*



all.

Through this often haunting, always touching, and sometimes even humorous account, child psychiatrist Bruce Perry gives readers a rare and eloquent peek at the terror experienced by traumatized children, and in so doing allows us to

Dog, I was struck by three things. Some children live horrific lives. Some of those with the most horrific lives miraculously grow up and *don't* b e c o m e sociopaths. And love, apparently, really can conquer

understand how the mind not only is damaged, but how it heals.

Here we meet the surviving children of Waco and the Branch Davidian cult, who only a few weeks after their world collapsed in a blazing inferno were laughing, learning to play and eat meals with members of the opposite sex (a practice forbidden by cult leader David Koresh), and integrating into American society. We meet Laura, a failure-to-thrive child on the brink of death who makes a miraculous turn-around thanks to the loving arms and physical affection of her foster grandmother. And we meet Justin, the boy who was kept in a dog kennel by his well-intentioned but totally clueless adult caregiver, a mentally handicapped man who had much experience raising puppies but none raising children.

What these children all have in common are childhoods filled with abuse and neglect and deprived of love and affection. Perry allows us to see their world as they themselves experience it, and the result is gut-wrenching.

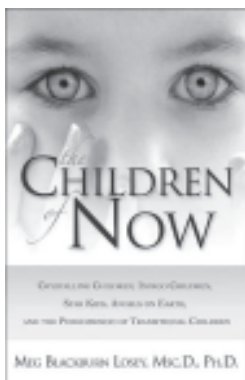
But Perry also shows us that, for most children, healing is possible, and usually comes in the form of a foster family willing to love a broken child, a mentor willing to teach an inexperienced parent how to nurture a child, or a child psychiatrist willing to look at life from the viewpoint of the child.

The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog is intense reading; it made me tear up more than once. But for anyone interested in knowing how wounded children can heal, this book is a must read.

~ review by Smoky Trudeau

The Children of Now
 by Meg Blackburn Losey
 New Page Books, 2007
 pp. 250, \$15.99

Recently, I watched a short documentary made by a young autistic woman. The video conveyed that the interaction of one



who appears to be having a very limited sensual experience with the world may actually be having a more intense perpetual dialogue through every level of being *all the time*. I was incredibly impressed by this

woman's ability to artfully raise awareness through this documentary. I find it no coincidence that, on the heels of this unique expansion of my own consciousness, I read *The Children of Now* by Meg Blackburn Losey. It is in the same spirit of Champion that Losey prescribes the practice of a full sensory life experience in order to successfully raise today's children.

Despite the fact that many of us who are now raising children are the Star Seeds and Indigo Children of the last few decades, we are still forced to work from within institutional parameters to meet our children's needs. Losey helps us recognize what our children's special gifts are and gives us information to help them grow on all levels. I admit that throughout the book I wanted her to explicitly say what changes to make in the household to bolster the children, what to demand of schools, how to help their doctors see past disabilities and prescriptions, how to keep the children engaged with the tactile world while fostering their spiritual evolution. In truth, mine was the rote thinking that is outdated and impedes growth in these dynamic children. Certainly Losey does give insight into how to recreate environments, education, medical care, self-confidence, and entertainment for these special beings. The one thing that she states most unapologetically is that the *adults of now* must expand their awareness, must allow their consciousnesses to be open to extraordinary possibilities in order to help their children root and blossom.

~ review by Kelley Harrell

The Book of Fairies (paperback)
Selected and Illustrated by Michael Hague
Harper Collins, 2006
pp. 128, \$9.99



Known world-wide for his glowing, tantalizing illustrations of children's literature, Michael Hague was afforded the opportunity

to choose stories he wanted to illustrate. *The Book of Fairies*' front cover is just the beginning of delight.

Hague's style was influenced by such masters as Arthur Rackham, N.C.Weyeth, Howard Pyle and early work from Disney Studio artists. *The Book of Fairies* is an anthology of stories and poems about fantasy creatures that will truly "cast a glamour" on readers of all ages. Some tales will be the familiar ones, but be prepared to be intrigued by little known stories of the darker deeds of the "good neighbors."

Besides illustrating the book, Hague shares knowledge and scholarship in the notes at the end of the collection, giving the history and the origins of the stories, the authors and their times. This is a wonderfully showcased rendering of the world of the Fay.

With a favorite cup of tea or chocolate, cuddle up in a deep, comfy chair and prepare yourself to be dazzled and mesmerized, by turns.

~ review by Kareth Bodman

**How the Pro-Choice Movement Saved America:
 Freedom, Politics, and the War on Sex
 (hardcover)**
by Cristina Page
Basic Books, 2006
pp. 236, \$24

<http://www.prochoicemovement.com>

Cristina Page's *How the Pro-Choice Movement Saved America* is a wake-up call



successfully alerting readers that freedom to make private reproductive choices is in jeopardy. As Page writes:

Most Americans might believe they understand the difference between contraception and abortion, between preventing a pregnancy and terminating one. The most active pro-lifers. . . don't. . . And, frighteningly, they've latched on to a legal argument that could obliterate that distinction in the eyes of the Supreme Court.

Page—the vice-president of the Institute for Reproductive Health Access of Naral Pro-Choice New York—outlines the steps being taken by small, determined groups of "pro-lifers" to abolish reproductive and other health rights. If the book had stopped there, it would simply have been an interesting read but perhaps have left me thinking, "Yeah—I know all that already." However, Page also lays out a concerted agenda by part of the "pro-life" camp to alter the American way of life as we have come to enjoy it.

In a brief 144 pages (the rest of the book contains extensive references, notes, and index), Page first provides the overview of how reproductive and other social rights are at risk. Pharmacists won't dispense emergency contraception or birth control pills for "moral" reasons. . . "pro-life" special interest groups influence the FDA and in the process, obliterate reasonable scientific discourse. . . government funded abstinence-only programs lie to our children and many are used to indoctrinate students to a strict Christian morality. ("Abstinence is the tool that we're using to reach children!" an Executive Director of an Abstinence group told the BBC in a quote captured by Page's book.)

From inconsistencies to lies to hidden agendas, Page offers a chilling picture of

the contemporary American “pro-life” movement. She provides statistics proving that anti-choice agendas *create* more abortions—the very thing “pro-lifers” purport to want to prevent. She then demonstrates how the movement has advanced their agenda of redefining *all* contraception as abortion—even though all scientific evidence disputes this. She reminds us that among the many benefits of contraception and family planning have been a rise in the health and standard of living of Americans. Then, Page outlines the steady march being made to strike down *Roe vs. Wade*. In such a world, Page explains, “. . . more than 1 million women a year—the number who currently get abortions—would have to consider whether they. . . might end up charged with a crime.”

She continues several pages later:

A post-Roe world would have more dire surprises in store. . . Without Roe, an infertile couple's chance to use in-vitro fertility technology may be severely limited. . . The effect of Roe's disappearance on people who opt for tests to determine birth defects would also be profound.

This book is highly recommended for all Americans, both Pro-and Anti-Choice. Grab your condoms and birth control pills, hold them close, and prepare yourself to feel outraged.

~ review by Suzanne Reynolds-Alpert

Nefertiti
by Nick Drake
Harper Collins Publishers, 2006
pp. 349, \$24.95

Nefertiti was one of the most powerful women of ancient times, rivaled only in her fame and authority by Cleopatra. She was the chief wife, or sometimes called “The Great Royal Wife,” of Amenhotep IV, who later called himself Akhenaten. It's now generally believed that she was co-ruler with Akhenaten.



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Probably the most important thing to know about Nefertiti and Akhenaten is their attempt to create a monotheistic religion, replacing the ancient Gods and Goddesses of Egypt with Aten, the Sun God. This created a huge cultural and political void, as it removed power from the hands of the hereditary priests of the old Gods. Knowing this little bit of history, you can now see why Nick Drake could imagine so rich a story based around the disappearance of the Queen.

History does not show in fact that Nefertiti disappeared, just that at a certain point there are no more records of her life or death. One mural on the wall of Akhenaten's tomb depicts the burial of a royal woman, but it's uncertain if this is Nefertiti or some other member of his harem. Mr. Drake takes this interesting fact, calls it a “disappearance”

and spins a fantastic mystery filled with opulent as well as disgusting details of everyday life on all levels of Egyptian society.

Rahotep, the youngest chief detective of the Thebes Medjay (police) division is charged by the Great Akhenaten with finding the missing Queen. The penalty for failure is not only his own death but the death of his wife and little daughters. It's a cruel world, but just for laughs, Drake makes sure we know that cops throughout all time and space are hooked on donuts.

"Ahmose...was relishing a pastry, as always, not noticing the crumbs that fell clumsily into the ample folds of his robe."

This is a pure procedural mystery, which could as easily have taken place in Chicago or London and anywhere in time. Rahotep is your average gumshoe cop, just trying to do an honest job. Mr. Drake's Egypt comes to life in rich detail. I recommend this book to anyone who loves a mystery or the mystery of Ancient Egypt.

~ review by Chant

Mysteria

by Mary Janice Davidson, Susan Grant,
P.C. Cast and Gena Showalter
The Berkley Publishing Group, July
2006
pp. 340, \$7.99

It's a warm summer afternoon and you're looking for an activity that doesn't require much energy or thought. Try this. Grab a comfy chair, your favorite summer drink (hard lemonade for me), and this book of four short stories of romance and magic. Set in the town of Mysteria, a sanctuary for those who are just a little different, these stories are funny, romantic, spirited and good for



light summer reading.

In "Mortal in Mysteria" by Susan Grant, the Demon High Lord of Self-Doubt is having some serious self-doubts of his own, leading him to commit an act of kindness! For his rebellion, the Devil banishes him from Hell, strips him of his rank, his magic and (gasp) makes him a mortal man. Where will he go, and what will he do?

Meanwhile, the only Christian minister in town, Harmony Faithful is praying for a sign from God. She has delivered her sermon to an empty church every Sunday since arriving in Mysteria, and her self-doubt is on the rise. Suddenly the earth begins to shake and rumble. Running outside, poor Harmony doesn't recognize that the gorgeous, muscled, naked man lying unconscious in the flowerbed is that sign from God. She'll figure it out, soon enough.

"The Witches of Mysteria and the Dead Who Love Them" by Gena Showalter is an exceedingly funny story of star crossed-lovers. Genevieve Tawdry has marked her prey and nothing will stop her from losing her virginity to Hunter Knight. Tonight! Genevieve and her sisters, Godiva and Glory are accomplished witches. Genevieve has been stalking Hunter, but he doesn't seem to mind all that much. He smiles sweetly, or leers suggestively, but never seems to make any effort to close the deal.

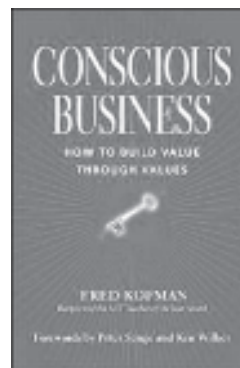
Fortified with a love potion made by Glory, she heads out to Hunter's bar, dressed in outrageously sexy clothes and determined that she will lay Hunter tonight. Everything goes about as wrong as it can until (was there ever any doubt?) the happily ever after ending.

The other two stories deal with lonely outcasts who think love has passed them by. In P.C. Cast's story, Candy Cox thinks she has been married too many times and is too old for love to come again. Swept off her feet by a charming but apparently unfaithful werewolf, she devises a wickedly funny revenge. In "Lone Wolf" by Davidson, the price of love may be just too painful to pay.

~ review by Chant

Conscious Business: How to Build Value through Values
by Fred Kofman
Sounds True Publishing, 2006
pp. 325, \$24.95

Business books, much like beginning



witchcraft books, eventually blur together. Both genres are prone to patterns of what they say and how they say it: replace moon, Goddess, and Sabbath with "anecdote, anecdote,

Emperor's Clothes, anecdote, Buddha, anecdote, Bhagavad Gita, and close with a rabbi joke," and you have captured the pattern of *Conscious Business* and its peer books designed to diagnose corporate neurosis.

The overuse of clichés in *Conscious Business* unfortunately shrouds its genuine value. Despite the business jargon and the endless role-plays, clearly Kofman knows what he's talking about. Still, too many anecdotes and trite examples overseason the meat of this book, making the knowledge it imparts about changing communication strategies difficult to digest. The purpose can be discerned with work: we all carry a certain amount of our personal baggage to work, and if we operate with awareness of our own issues and the issues of others, we can change our perceptions of our co-workers and find



a way to work together. Kofman could have found a more original way to say and demonstrate this.

The author builds his business cure on a philosophy with three branches: responsibility, integrity, and humility. Although he undermines his own credibility by making a comment about psychobabble and then creating more when he renames responsibility “response-ability,” Kofman builds a valid set of tools for diagnosing problematic interactions in the workplace and taking control of their outcomes.

Despite its failings of craft, the book has value. Kofman’s philosophy is elegantly realistic: take control of what can be controlled. The only thing that can really be controlled, in any circumstance, is the self. By choosing a meditative approach to conflict, and by actively seeking to understand the other, conflicts that derail work productivity can be overcome. In order to assume this more centered attitude toward disagreements, Kofman states that a person must build integrity and assume an attitude of humility. Humility, for the purposes of *Conscious Business*, is defined as a genuine consideration and care for another person’s perspective.

Kofman does account for co-workers and clients not initiated into his particular methods of conflict management. He recommends adaptive strategies for circumstances where the outcome may not fit the ideal, and even suggests, at times, that the person initiating the new techniques be graceful—humble—when the desired change is not reached right away. He also steps away from common corporate commands cum buzzwords: he gives a strong argument against multitasking, and advocates that those doing a job focus on process over outcome. While he does not negate the importance of having measurable goals and standards for outcomes, his perspective braves confronting some longstanding attitudes about what employees should be able to do. In the face of the spoiled-child attitudes common in corporate upper management, recommending refocusing work on process over outcome isn’t just novel, it’s also courageous. His efforts to

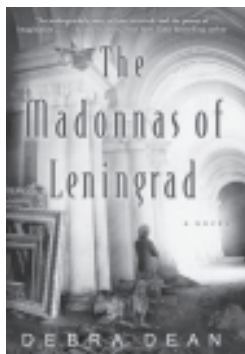
help people steer the balance between the doing of good work and the result of good work, he details everything from the best methods of handling conflict to methods of delivering useful compliments.

As a psycho-spiritual commentary, *Conscious Business* is a cluster of clichés that do not penetrate the needs of the already spiritual. Though the road opened through this book is not a new step for those already seeking balance through other methods, it is a well-directed strategy for those who feel trapped by the thought-loop inherent in corporate life, and who wish to awaken their own spiritual consciousness through simple action. Kofman offers the corporate hordes hope, dressed in the same outfit as any other business-psychology book: it is possible to act with integrity in a big business context.

~ review by Diana Rajchel

The Madonnas of Leningrad
by Debra Dean
Harper Collins, 2006
pp. 228, \$13.95

An estimated 5.1 million Americans will have Alzheimer’s Disease in 2007, most of them over the age of 65. More than half are women.



One of the most beautiful and haunting novels I’ve read in the past five years has got to be *The Madonnas of Leningrad*. When Debra Dean introduces the reader to Marina, we quickly discover the coping techniques she uses to function in a world of reality that is slowly slipping away into the past—a past full of drama, history and beauty. While it’s difficult for Marina to remember whose marriage she is about to attend, we see the strange ways in which the memory does work. Marina’s mind

revisits in clear and precise recanting the days spent working in war-torn Leningrad as a tour guide in the Hermitage Museum. The characters slowly starve, live underground, and suffer the ravages of surviving the bombings of 1941 as the German Army approaches, all this while they also must pack the museum’s priceless works of art.

Marina and Anya, an elderly co-worker, commit the paintings to memory in exquisite detail, such detail that a group of visiting young men weep as they, too, envision the lost art through Marina’s eyes and words. When everything around her is crumbling, the galleries of paintings depicting the Madonna take on a presence that even Marina struggles to understand.

As the author moves us back and forth between periods, the lives of the past begin to be much more vivid than the modern world and it becomes slowly clear in which world Marina would prefer to reside.

Twice in my life, I’ve watched loved ones slide into a world or realm only visible to them. From this side it is odd and unsettling. But for the first time I can see, through Debra Dean’s writing, what it may be like from the other side. Add this to your Must Read list.

~ review by Denise Bell

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ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

Ardinger, Ph.D.: The author of several books including *Pagan Every Day* (RedWheel/Weiser, 2006). Her day job is freelance editing for people who don't want to embarrass themselves in print. Barbara lives in southern California. (www.barbaraardinger.com)

Denise Bell: A certified organic lavender farmer in rural Oklahoma. She is a student of Nature who believes that a day spent in the field with wind in her hair and dirt in her hands is as good a life as can be lived. She is a solitary practitioner and member of the *Oklahoma Pagan Heathen Alliance* and serves as the Review Circle Coordinator for TBP.

Kareth Bodman: A first time reviewer for *The Beltane Papers*.

Chant: A regular reviewer for *The Beltane Papers*.

Kelley Harrell: A syndicated columnist and shamanic practitioner living in North Carolina. She is the author of *Gift of the Dreamtime: Awakening to the Divinity of Trauma*. You can read about Kelly Harrell's work at <http://www.soulintentarts.com>

Lady Isadora: A Witch priestess, dancer, critically-acclaimed Pagan recording artist and writer, award-winning languages scholar, and all-around broomstick bluestocking. She is Founder of *Our Lady of Spiritual Audacity* and the *Black Witch-Hat Society*, a member of the *Fellowship of Isis*, and a longtime trustee of the *Universal Federation of Pagans*.

Kate Laity: A long-time contributor to *The Beltane Papers*.

Nellie Levine: A regular reviewer and contributor to *The Beltane Papers*.

Diana Rajchel: A consummate feminist curmudgeon and rabble-rouser, has her third degree in Wicca and takes that as license not to take herself seriously ever again. She writes full-time, runs a custom perfumery and acts as the Staff Chair for Twin Cities Pagan Pride.

Suzanne Reynolds-Alpert: A part-time writer and poet, tarot card reader, and energy healer. She is a full-time wife and mother, and also holds down a job as a technical assistance specialist on a not-for-profit project. Suzanne has been following an eclectic Goddess path for almost ten years, and is currently a member of the Sisterhood of Avalon.

Eileen Troemel: Her love of nature inspires her creativity. As a solitary, she is a witch who is seeking. Writing in numerous forms, she has been published in many publications, including Circle Magazine where she is a staff writer.

Smoky Trudeau: A freelance writer and editor for 15 years. Her first novel, *Redeeming Grace*, was published in 2003 and she is currently shopping for a publisher for her second. She lives in Champaign, IL with her husband, daughter and a plethora of animals, both wild and domestic.

Katherine Turcotte: A freelance writer and regular reviewer for *The Beltane Papers*. Katherine's work can be found on the following websites: *The Essential Herbal Body, Mind, Spirit Magazine* at <http://www.sasksworld.com/bodymindspirit/>, *BookPleasures.com* at <http://www.bookpleasures.com>, *Enchanted Wood Musings* at <http://enchantedwoodmusings.blogspot.com>

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Morning Glory Zell Ravenheart : Morning Glory is battling Myeloma. This is a very aggressive cancer of the bone marrow and blood which turns the bones and marrow into plasma. A support group has been set up on Yahoo at <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/MorningGloryHealingUpdate> This group will be a place for everyone to learn what is going on with Morning Glory's healing process without emails having to be sent laboriously to each person who wishes to know...and so that we can share with each other the heartfelt responses that so many are sending. Please join if you wish to be kept abreast of unfolding news of the state of her health.

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() #26: Kathy Morton-Stanion's Macha cover; more on Celtic Goddess Macha by Catherine Clare; Dark Maiden; Stregheria; Patricia Telesco's Goddess and Ghosts garden; words and music to Jennifer Berezan's *She Carries Me*.

() #27: Striking Blue-Eyed Madonna cover by Brandi Fairbanks; a skeptic visits the Black Madonna; reclaiming Mary; Lilith; Ershkigal; dealing with grief and loss; *Holy Maidenhead: or How Our Medieval Foremothers Were Sold Virginity* by K. A. Laity.

() #28: *Spirit of Fire* cover by Katlyn Breene; fairy tales; witches' some new looks at Demeter and Persephone; Hot Flashes as Dream Symbols' hats' pomegranates' rituals and BBQ recipes.

() #29: Mara Friedman's *Flying Into Spring* cover' birth and elemental empowerment; Australian aboriginal magic; African goddesses; Easter witches; Cyber Rituals and four new columns.

() #30: A beautiful *Hestia* cover by Katlyn Breene. Altars, Altars, Altars; *The Brazilian Great Mother* by Mirella Faur; and an interview with Z Budapest and Diana Paxson.

() #31: Suzanne Cheryl Gardner's light-hearted *Dance Like No One is Watching* cover; storytelling as healing; stories; a focus on dance; a powerful Hekate meditation by Morning Glory Zell; and much more

() #32: Our 20th anniversary issue! Helen Nelson-Reed's most lovely *The Goddess as Woman, Gazing into Her Past* graces our cover. Join us in remembering our past. In this issue you will find tattoos, Max Dashu, Charlene Spretnak, Deciphering Margaret Murray.

() Issue #33: Spectacular spiritual art cover by Julia Stewart introduces a Mother/Fire issue: the mystical history of Mother, some Irish Goddess history, feminist scrying lessons, Hagia Sophia, modern protection rituals.

() #34: "Wise Woman" by Lisa Hunt graces the cover; articles on Peri-Menopause, The Crone, interview with Riane Eisler, Irish, Owl and Candy Cane Goddesses, great new stories and poems.

() #35: Purple "Dolphin Dreams" cover by Suzanne Cheryl Gardner with our first mermaid! Inner transformation theme; Growing Up in a Druid Clan, Celtic wordsearch puzzle, interviews with TBP Advisory Council member Ruth Barrett and our astrologer Cal Garrison.

() #36: Gorgeous *Gaia's Blessing* cover by Marcia Snedecor introduces our Mother's Time/Making a Difference issue: Rebecca Solnit's Housewife Theory of History; Shekinah Mountainwater's concept of the Womanpath and a re-viewing of Mists of Avalon movie; a menarche celebration; stories, poems and more.

() #37: Deborah Koff-Chapin's *Sister Monk Harem Series* painted with her Touch Drawing technique graces our cover. Interviews with Margot Adler, PC Cast, Karen Tate and Macha Nightmare. Articles on Feminism, Paganism, book reviews and more.

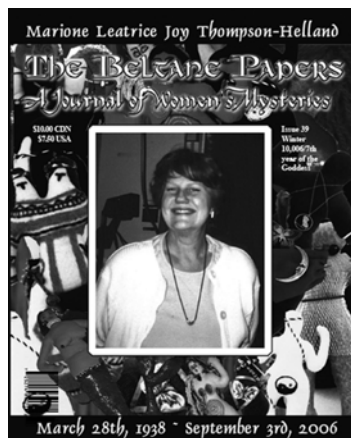
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() #38 The strikingly beautiful "The Unexpected Gift" by Helena Nelson-Reed graces this cover with interviews with Margaret Starbird and articles on Divine Feminism.



() #39 The Marione memorial issue. The Priestess Path by Marione LH Thompson, Cancer Musings by Shekinah Mountainwater, two articles about menstruation and menstrual suppression, Goddess wordsearch and much more.



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